



BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

IMMORTAL INDIA

Volume I

J. H. Dave

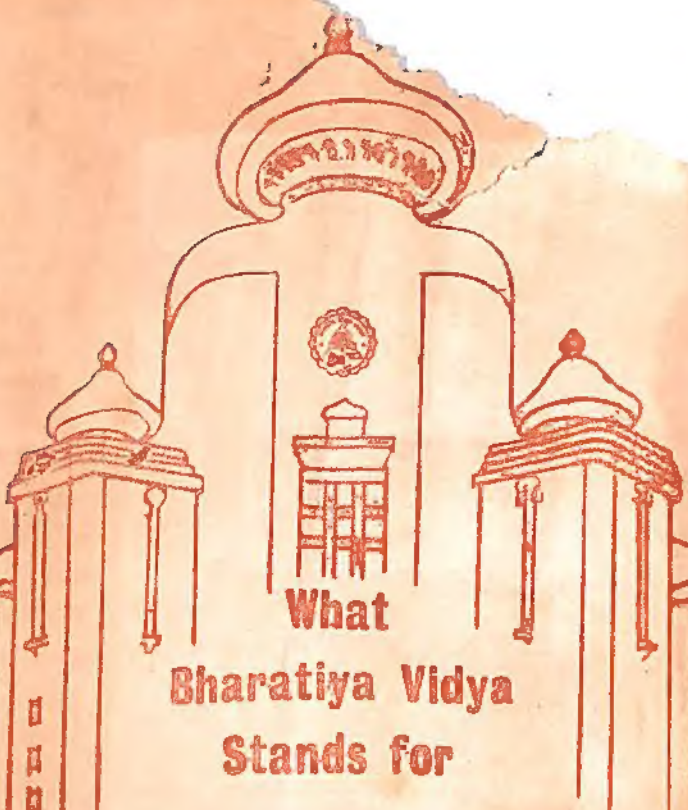
GENERAL EDITORS

K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR



SHARADITA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY



What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles, and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Sahitya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher.

(ii) a spirit of inquiry.

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which is flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form of attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.





आ नो मद्ग्राः कृतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-

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45

IMMORTAL INDIA,

BY

J. H. DAVE

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IMMORTAL INDIA

BY

J. H. DAVE



1970

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulses of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2.50/-

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages : Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit :

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities ; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order ; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the

instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it; the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life; a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax

is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI :
3rd October 1951

K. M. MUNSHI

SUPPLEMENTARY PREFACE

The *Tirtha* cult is a unique by-product of Indian culture. Rivers, mountains, shrines and holy spots on the banks of rivers, have been sanctified by tradition and association and visit to these places has been considered for centuries as a paramount duty of a Hindu.

This vast movement carrying millions every year to visit sacred *Tirthas* has had the greatest influence in strengthening the religious and cultural foundations of India, in bringing to every man and woman the consciousness of India's glorious past and in inducing a sense of sanctity of the Motherland, unity among her children and turning their mind Godwards.

Shri J. H. Dave has rendered a great service in writing these series of articles, aptly termed "Immortal India" in which the *Tirthas* are described, together with their puranic and other traditions. It presents us a vivid picture of the manner in which the great fabric of Indian culture was reared through the ages by those who visited the *Tirthas*. Incidentally it also gives an admirable description of the picturesque spots so intimately woven in the collective consciousness of India.

To the modern generation of Indians who have been denied access to the puranic traditions and whose ways of life leave them ignorant of all that is worth knowing in India, this book will be invaluable in understanding what India was and is; for despite the changing content of religious and cultural outlook, the *Tirthas* have remained an essential part of an Indian's life.

BOMBAY.
29-7-1957

K. M. MUNSHI

Message from H. H. Sri Sanikaracharya
of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham

॥ श्रीः ॥



श्रीमत्परमहंस परिव्राजकाचार्यवर्य

श्रीमच्छंकरभगवत्पाद प्रतिष्ठित

श्रीकाञ्ची कामकोटिपीठाधिप जगद्गुरु

श्रीमद्यन्त्रशेखरेन्द्रसरस्वती श्रीपादैः

मुम्बापुरीत्यभारतीयविद्याभवन
निर्वाहकाय देवे उपाहाय श्री. जयन्त
कृष्णरामणे क्रियते नाशायणस्मृतिः।

भारतीयविद्याभवनप्रकाशयमा-
नायां पत्रिकायां भवता क्रमशो
लिखिता 'अमरभारत' इति नामधरा
य लेखावली अल्पना संकलीकृत्य
ग्रन्थरूपेण प्रकटिता अस्मभ्यं प्रहिता
अवालोकि।

अस्मिन् ग्रन्थे भारतीयविविध
पुण्यत्रेवतीर्थादीनां प्राचीनः इतिहासः
उद्दानीतनपरिच्छेदितः, तत्तदनुगुणः।

पौराणिकालयानग्रथनम्, तिलानेसा
दिनिर्दिष्टाः, तत्तत्तीर्थयात्राविवरणः,
अन्ये च विविधाः विषयाः सम्यक्
प्रतिपाद्यन्ते।

अयं ग्रन्थः क्षेत्रतीर्थटीकोत्सु-
कानां तन्महिम्निजास्मूनां चरितकान-
मद्वे उपकाराय भवतीति नितान्तं
सन्तुष्यामः।

विजययात्रास्थानम् नारायणरम्भूतिः
कीलनूर
हेमलम्बवैजारावहृदचतुर्दशी.

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INTRODUCTION

The series of articles on the various *Tirthas* and ancient spots under the title of "IMMORTAL INDIA", first appeared in the English fortnightly Journal of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, "BHAVAN'S JOURNAL". Subsequently they also appeared in Hindi in the Bhavan's Hindi fortnightly journal "BHARATI". Some of the articles have also been translated in different Indian languages under special permission. A few were also reproduced in the 'Bombay State Transport Review'. To meet the constant demand of having them collectively in a book form, the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan has decided to publish them in its Book University Series in four parts.

The information collected under the various titles is not necessarily exhaustive. Apart from his own observations, the writer has also collected notes from numerous earlier works and authorities. Some of them are indicated in the text. But the writer takes this opportunity to acknowledge his indebtedness and gratitude to all of them, whether specifically mentioned or not. An attempt has been made in these articles to give an account based on History, Tradition, Vedic, Epic and Puranic Literatures, Sanskrit digests on Tirthas, Inscriptions and other sources. Religious movements and associations of saintly personalities are also noted. The purpose would be served if the account creates an interest in the readers about the various ancient and holy spots, and a visit to them if possible.

Bhagavata, 1-19-8. says:

तत्रोपजग्मु मूवनं पुनाना
महानुभावा मुनयः सशिष्याः ।
प्रायेण तीर्थाभिगमापदेशैः
स्वयं हि तीर्थानि पुनन्ति सन्तः ॥

“The high-souled sages, moving from place to place, purified the whole earth. They came there along with their disciples (to the bank of Ganga, where King Parikshit was fasting unto death). *Under the guise of visiting the Tirthas, these holy men usually purify by their visits, the Thirthas themselves.*”

Bhagavata, 1-13-10, further says: “Bhagavata people like you are *Tirthas* in themselves. As a matter of fact. *it is they who sanctify the Thirthas by their visits as they carry within their hearts the mace-bearing Lord Vishnu.*”

भवद्विधा भागवतास्तीर्थभूताः स्वयं विभो ।

तीर्थोर्कुर्वन्ति तीर्थानि स्वान्तःस्थेन गदामृता ।

That is the reason why Skanda 1-2-13-10 says that the main *yatra* is that of going to holy men or to spots habited by or associated with them—it is the *Purusha Yatra* which is principal and merely visiting the geographical spots of the earth is only secondry.

मुख्या पुरुषयात्रा हि तीर्थयात्रानुषङ्गतः ।

Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva, Chapter 108, Verses 16-18 says: “Just as certain limbs of the body are purer than others, so are certain places on earth more sacred,—some on account of their situation, others because of their sparkling waters, and others because of the association or habitation of saintly people.”

Mahabharata, Vanaparva, 82-13 to 17 further add: “Performance of sacrifices is an elaborate affair involving heavy expenditure which only the princely or the rich can afford—not those without wealth, equipment, wife or

priest. Tirtha can be accomplished by all, even the poor, and therefore excels in merit even the best of sacrifices."

Vayu Purana, 77-127, says:

"Those without faith, those full of sins, those with a doubting mind, those who are Godless, and those indulging in bad reasoning—these five types of people can reap no benefit from any *Tirtha*."

Tristhalisetu of Narayana Bhatta quoting Sankha states:

सर्वेषां सर्वतीर्थानि पापघ्नानि सदा नृणाम् ।

परस्परानपेक्षाणि कथितानि मनीषिभिः ।

"All the *Tirthas*—independently of each other are equally capable of destroying sins." All streams, mounts and rivers are sacred. But Ganga is especially so.

It is stated that by a mere mention of the name of a *Tirtha*, by a bath in the holy waters thereof, and by performing *Tarpana* of the Pitris or ancestors at that place, one destroys sins and acquires merit leading to happiness. The usual rule is to go to a *Tirtha*, to fast there for 3 days, and make charitable gifts of gold and cows. One not doing so becomes poor. Sometimes it so happens that certain *Tirthas* are inaccessible or very difficult to approach. In such cases, it is stated that one must approach such difficult *Tirthas* through mind, i.e., by contemplating over them.

Garudapurana defines a *Tirtha* as follows:

रजस्तमोविरहितैस्तपसा द्यूतकल्मषैः ।

यदध्यासितमहद्भिस्तद्धि तीर्थं प्रचक्षते ।

"That Holy spot is known as a *Tirtha*, which is associated with or habited by saints deserving reverence, who are without passion or delusion and who have washed away their sins by the performance of penance."

Tirthas are classified as either *Swayambhuta* like

Prabhasa; or *Nirmita* i.e. constructed by others, like temples, etc. According to another classification, *Tirthas* are either *Daiva* or *Asura* or *Arshaka* or *Manusha*. They may be in heaven or on earth or in Patala. In Mahabharata it is stated that *Naimisharanya* is a *Bhauma Tirtha*, *Pushkara* is an *Antariksha Tirtha* and *Kurukshetra* is a *Tirtha* for all the three worlds, or *Triloka Tirtha*.

It has been noted above that association of godly and saintly people lends holiness to a spot. But one's own subjective approach is equally important.

External cleanliness alone is ineffective without internal purity. That is why it has been aptly stated in Kasi Khanda:

निगृहीतेन्द्रियग्रामो यत्रैव वसते नरः ।

तस्य तत्र कुक्षेत्रं नैमिषं पुष्करं तथा ।

"Wherever a self-controlled man stays, for him there are famous *Tirthas* like *Kurukshetra*, *Naimisharanya* and *Pushkara* at his very residence."

Merely taking a dip in water is no real *snana* or bath at all. "He is properly bathed; who dips himself into the water of self-control, and who washes away his mental impurity with faith."

स स्नातो यो दमस्नातः श्रद्धाशुद्धमनोमलः ।

One who is impure, treacherous, cruel, hypocritical, and addicted to sensual pleasures remains sinful and mentally impure, even if he has taken baths in all the *Tirthas*. Making gifts, performance of sacrifice and penance, remaining clean, visits to *Tirthas* and even acquisition of learning are of no avail, if the mind and intention are not pure. One who bathes in the *Manasa* or mental *Tirtha*, where water is purified with contemplation, and where dirt in the form of passion and attachment is washed away, attains the highest path. Removal of mere physical dirt

does not make a person pure. It is only on washing away one's mental impurity that one becomes mentally pure. Kasi Khanda adds : "Thousands of watery creatures like fish, etc., are born in water and also die in water, even in the *Tirthas*. But as the required mental approach through purity is lacking in them, none would suggest that these creatures acquire any merit or heaven."

जायन्ते च म्रियन्ते च जलेष्वेव जलौकसः ।

न च गच्छन्ति ते स्वर्गमविशुद्धमनोमलाः ।

Tirtha yatra is prescribed for people of all the four *asramas*—those of the student, the house-holder, the *vana-prastha* and the *yati*. Similiarly, people of all the four *varnas* are asked to undertake the *Tirtha yatra*. In the case of a house-holder, he should go to *Tirthas* along with his wife, and if he maintains the sacred fire as an *Agni-hotri*, he should also carry that fire with him. It has been stated that various *Manus*, *Vasus*, *Rudras*, *Adityas*, *Maruts* and other deities, as also the *Sadhyas*, *Nagas*, *Yakshas*, *Rakshasas* and Sages,—all these have attained *Siddhis* through the *Tirthas*.

This ancient land of Bharata was known in very ancient times, according to Bhagāvata, by the name of Nabhi Varsha. Swayambhuva Manu's son was Priya-Vrata. His eldest son was Agnidhra, who became the ruler of the entire Jambudweepa. Agnidhra had seven sons and he divided his kingdom between them in seven *khandas* or *varshas*. The first *khandas* or *varsha* which came to his eldest son Nabhi, being the present 'Bharata Varsha', came to be known after Nabhi as 'Nabhi Varsha'.

This Nabhi desired to have a god-like son. The Lord even though unborn or Aja, was born as Nabhi's son out of grace, in the form of Rishabha Deva, who preached to the world the Paramahansa Dharma. Since then, this land which was originally known as "Nabhi Varsha," came

to be further known as "Aja Nabha Varsha." Bharata was the eldest son of Rishaba Deva; he was a great yogin and also an equally great king. He retired to the forest; but on account of the attachment he developed for a young one of a deer, he assumed in the next birth the form of a deer. In his third birth he became the famous Jadabharata. Tradition says that this land of India which was so far called "Nabhi Varsha" and "Aja Nabha Varsha" began to be known as "Bharata Varsha" after this famous saintly ruler Bharata. There is another tradition which says that this land came to be known as Bharata after Bharata, the son of Dushyanta and Sakuntala. Brahmanda Purana records a tradition that before India came to be known as Bharata, it was known as Himahva Varsha; Linga Purana says that it was then known as Himavata Varsha. The word India is derived from "Sindhu."

This land of Bharata with all its sacredness is identified with Lord Janardana, who has assumed the form of a Kurma. Bharata is known as *Karma bhoomi* and the sacred literature of India emphatically states that *Parikramana* or a round of this entire country 'Bharata' while visiting its various *Tirthas* is equivalent to taking a round of the entire earth, and it is further considered as one of the best means of acquiring merit.

Pandavas had undertaken a long Tirtha Yatra for the destruction of their sins and for regaining their lost kingdom. They had moved round this entire holy country of Bharata for a long period of 12 difficult years in the company of famous sages and had ultimately fulfilled their ambitions. Sri Balarama, the elder brother of Sri Krishna, had once been to Naimisharanya. At that time, Suta Romaharshana, who was reciting puranas, did not get up to receive him. Balarama in anger killed him. As Roma-

harshana, though a *suta*, was occupying the position of a reciter of purana, Balarama had incurred a sin equivalent to that of *Brahma-hatya*, and had to perform the necessary *prayaschitta*. One of the main effective *prayaschittas* for one committing *Brahma-hatya* out of ignorance is stated in the Sastras to be the *parikramana* or moving round the whole of Bharata Varsha for a period of 12 months while performing the various religious *vratas*, visiting sacred *Tirthas* on the way and taking baths in their holy waters. Refer to Bhagavata 10-78-40:

ततश्च भारतं वर्षं परीत्य सुसमाहितः ।

चरित्वा द्वादश मासांस्तीर्थस्नानी विमुद्ध्यसे ।

Parasurama had killed Sahasrarjuna, who was a king. As he had thus committed *Raja-hatya*, his father Sage Jamadagni recommended to him the Tirtha yatra of the whole of Bharata Varsha for a period of one year by way of *prayaschitta*. Tirtha Yatra was not only recommended as a *prayaschitta* for *Brahma-hatya* and *Raja-hatya*, it was also recommended to King Yudhishtira after his success in the Mahabharata war in order to recover his *soka*, his sense of guilt, and regaining his lost mental peace. But apart from anything else, one is also recommended to have the *parikramana* of Bharata Varsha just to acquire the grace of God and attain spiritual merit. Vidura, for example, moved round the whole of Bharata without any kind of desire or necessity to perform a *prayaschitta*.

गां पर्यटन् मेघ्यविविक्तवृत्तिः

सदाऽऽप्लुतोऽधः शयनोऽवधूतः ।

अलक्षितः स्वैरवधूतशेषो

व्रतानि चेरे हरितोषणानि ।

इत्थं ब्रजन्भारतमेव वर्षं

कालेन यावद् गतवान् प्रभासम् ॥

Bhagavata, 3-1-19 and 20.

Similarly, many Sages, Acharyas, Yogis and religious teachers have made in the past and are making even now a *parikramana* of the whole of Bharata. Mahatma Gandhi moved round the whole Bharata after his return from Africa.

Parts of the Bharata Varsha were known by different names. "The country fixed by Gods and situated between two divine rivers, Saraswati and Drishadvati, is known as Brahnavarta" (Manu 2-17). "Immediately next to Brahnavarta is the country known as Brahma-rishi Desa, consisting of Kurukshetra, Matya, Panchala and Surasena" (Manu 2-19). "The country situated between the two mountain ranges of Himalaya and Vindhya in the North and the South, as also in the east of Kurushetra and west of Prayaga is known as Madhya Desa" (Manu 2-21). "The country situated between the eastern ocean and the western ocean and between two mountain ranges of Himalayas and Vindhya, is known as Aryavarta," (Manu 2-22). That country is known as "Yajniya" or sacred, where the black antelope moves (Manu 2-23). Aryavarta is also defined in a general manner without reference to any limits. The name Jambudweepa, often identified with India, is a geographical division of the earth, but the name Bharata Varsha is a political and cultural concept indicating common sovereign rulership and identity of cultural ideas from Himalayas to Cape Comorin—"Asetu Himalayat."

कल्पायुषां स्थानजयात् पुनर्भवात् क्षणायुषां भारतभूजयो वरम् ।

क्षणेन मर्त्येन कृतं मनस्विनः संन्यस्य संयान्त्यमर्थं पदं हरेः ।

यद्यत्र नः स्वर्गसुखावशेषितं सिवष्टस्य सूतस्य कृतस्य शोभनम् ।

तेनाजनाभे स्मृतिमज्जन्म नः स्याद वयं हरिर्यद् मज्जतां सं तनोति ।

Bhagavata, 5-19-23 and 28 eulogise Bharata as follows:

"It is better to take a birth in Bharata with even a short life rather than enjoy the happiness of heaven for a

kalpa; the reason is that a man in Bharata, if he is so minded, is capable of attaining the fearless state of the Lord, if he leaves aside all things and thinks even for a short time of the Lord. Therefore, the prayer is that, if there is any merit still left on account of the past performance of sacrifices or good deeds or utterance of good speech, capable of yielding even heaven, let such merit help us in having our next birth in this ancient land of Bharata Varsha, also known as Aja Nabha Varsha, so that we may remember the Lord, who always showers His graces on those who seek Him."

When one undertakes a journey to a *Tirtha*, it has been specifically recommended that one should, as far as possible, go walking. There are numerous advantages of undertaking such journeys by foot. Places, which it is not possible to visit, when one travels in a conveyance, either of the old type or the modern type, can be visited with leisure and advantage on foot. One of the texts says: "A journey to a *Tirtha* by foot is in itself a good penance, and that, if one employs a conveyance, he will lose half of his merit. If he takes advantage of shoes or an umbrella, he will still further reduce his merit. If he carries on business on the way, three-fourths of the merit is gone and by accepting a gift, he loses all merit." However, it has been provided that one, who is not physically well, and undertakes a journey to a *Tirtha* according to his capacity, even employing a conveyance, does not lose any merit.

Tirtha is a holy place of pilgrimage, especially on or near the bank of a sacred river, or a lake, or near the sea. A *Kshetra* is a sacred spot at other places. Usually, holy shrines of the Hindus are situated on spots, which are attractive on account of the nature around them, for example, on the tops of mountains, near the rivers or the lakes, or the sea, or near the sources of rivers or at secluded place

where it is possible to practise penance or concentrate the mind in contemplation.

Lists of sacred mountains, rivers, etc. as also holy spots connected with Siva, Vishnu, Sakti and other deities are given in detail in different Puranas. Below is given a short illustrative list of sacred mountains and rivers in Srimad Bhagavata Purana in its 5th Skandha, Chapter 19.

Mountains

Malaya, Mangalaprastra, Mainaka, Trikuta, Rishabha, Kutaka, Kollaka, Sahya, Devagiri, Rishyamuka, Sri-Saila, Venkata, Mahendra, Varidhara Vindhya, Suktiman, Rikshagiri, Pariyatra, Drona, Chitrakuta, Govardhana, Raivataka, Kakubha, Nila, Gokamukha, Indrakila and Kamagiri.

Rivers

Candrasava, Tamraparni, Avatoda, Kritamala, Vaihayasi, Kaveri, Veni, Payasvini, Sarkaravarta, Tungabhadra, Kriehna, Venya, Bhimarthi, Godavari, Nirvindhya, Payoshni, Tapi, Reva, Surasa, Narmada, Charmanvati, Sindhu, Andha, Sona, Mahanadi, Vedasmriti, Rishikulya, Trisama, Kausiki, Mandakini, Yamuna, Saraswati, Drishadvati, Gomati, Sarayu, Rodhasvati, Saptavati, Sushoma, Satadru, Chandrabhaga, Marudvridha, Vitasta, Asikni and Visva.

Regarding the waters of these rivers, it has been stated that the waters of river Saraswati purify a man after a bath of three days, those of Yamuna after a bath of seven days, those of Ganga immediately on taking the bath; and those of Narmada on their mere sight. Regarding Tapi, it has been stated that merely remembering her purifies a man.

Regarding great rivers meeting the ocean, it has been stated that they are *rajasvala* or dirty in two months when the sun is in Cancer and Leo i.e. in the rainy season. When they are in this condition, usually a bath or Tarpana etc. are to be avoided. But it is provided that this restriction does not apply when one is performing the religious ceremony of *Upakarma*, or offering gifts or libations or taking a bath after a death or on the occasions of solar and lunar eclipses. Similarly, when Jupiter and Venus are in their *asta*, i.e. in combination with the sun, *shana*, *sraddha* etc., in *Tirthas* are to be avoided. But it is specially provided that this restriction does not apply in the case of river Godavari, at Gaya, on the Srisaila mountain and at the time of the Solar and Lunar eclipses. Vayu Purana says that one can offer a *pinda* in *sraddha* at Gaya according to prescribed rites at all times, even though the time happens to be an Adhika Masa or an intercalary month or one's own birthday, or when Jupiter and Venus are in *asta* or combination, or even when Jupiter is in Leo.

One desirous of undertaking a pilgrimage to a *Tirtha* is recommended by Kasi Khanda the following procedure: Before starting he must fast at his residence, offer prayers with devotion to Ganesa and to his own ancestors, and offer salutations to learned brahmins and saintly people. After concluding his fast and eating something in token of such conclusion (Parana), he must start with a pleasant mind and decide to observe certain vows which he must strictly observe. When he returns from the *Tirtha Yatra*, he should again perform *sraddhas* etc. The fast must be on the previous day and worship of Ganesa on the succeeding day. For the pilgrimage, he is asked to put on a modest dress fit for a pilgrim. Before starting from his village or town it has been recommended that he should take a

pradakshina of his own village or town. He is asked to strictly avoid acceptance of gifts.

Whenever one goes to any *Tirtha*, the usual rule is that one should get shaved at that place, and should observe a fast. But this rule does not apply in the case of the following four *Tirthas*: Kurukshetra, Visala, Viraja and Gaya. With respect to ladies, particularly those whose husbands are alive, it has been stated that *mundana* or shaving in their case is to be understood as cutting of their braid of hair by only two finger-breadths. The *sradha* to be performed at *Tirtha* is known as *Ghrita sradha*, because use of ghee or clarified butter is more prominent in them.

While undertaking a *Tirtha yatra*, one is asked to strictly follow certain disciplinary rules. For example, it is stated that in order to realise the full merit of a *Tirtha* one must control his hands, feet and mind; HE MUST STUDY THE GREATNESS AND IMPORTANCE OF THE PARTICULAR TIRTHA HE IS VISITING; he must observe the vow of a fast or of eating only once a day and maintain his good character above reproach. "An evil mind is not purified even though one washes himself a hundred times in a *Tirtha*, and he still remains as impure as a vessel containing liquor." "Numerous varieties of fish reside in *Tirthas* like Ganga; so also flocks of birds reside in temples; for want of *bhava* or devotional sentiment in their hearts, they do not acquire any merit either from the *Tirtha* or from the temple. One must therefore approach *Tirthas* only with proper *bhava*." It is said that in the matter of mantra, *tirtha*, a learned brahmin, deity, astrologer, doctor and preceptor, one's success is commensurate only with one's own *bhavana*; it is, therefore, necessary to have a proper faith and devotional approach.

When one visits *Tirthas*, he is likely to come in contact with all sorts of people. It has been specifically provided that there are no restrictions of untouchability in a *Tirtha*. "In *Tirthas*, marriages, journeys, battles, sacrifices, revolutions, festivals and when there are big conflagrations, there are no restrictions of untouchability."

While visiting a *Tirtha*, if some other *Tirtha* comes on the way one is advised not to neglect the latter and asked to perform *snana*, *sraddha* etc. even at the latter place. An incidental visit to such other *Tirthas* is said to give additional merit.

There is merit even in proceeding towards a *Tirtha*. It is stated that if after observing the prescribed fast, one starts for a *Tirtha* and unfortunately dies on the way, he is said to go to the *Rishimandala* after his death.

Even if one cannot avoid going to a *Tirtha* in some conveyance and with shoes on, one is recommended at least to walk some distance on foot; and as soon as the *Tirtha* or the temple is within his sight, he must offer a *sashtanga namaskara*; take out his head dress and then proceed further towards the sacred spot. One is asked to have his first touch of the waters of a *Tirtha* with the *pranava mantra*; then with proper mantras he is asked to have a complete bath, along with the washing of his clothes (*sachaila*). He is then asked to get shaved and then after bathing again he is asked to perform the *sraddha* of his ancestors. In order to purify himself he is also required to observe a fast.

There is special merit in having a shave at *Prayaga* and in giving up one's own body at *Banaras*. According to one text, shave is prescribed in the following six circumstances: "when one goes for a *yatra* of *Ganga* or of *Konarak*; when there is the death anniversary of his father or his mother; when one keeps sacred fire; and at the time of performing sacrifices." This shaving at *Tirthas*

is said to destroy all sins. As observed earlier, in the case of married women whose husbands are alive, it has been prescribed that only two finger-breadths of the braid of hair should be cut.

Snana, *Japa*, *Homa*, *Sraddha* and *Dana* at the Tirthas are said to liberate seven generations of a man. Generally, *snana* etc. are to be performed during the course of the day and not at night; but a *Snana* or *Dana* which is *Naimittika* i.e. which has to be performed on account of some special occasions like the eclipses, marriage, solar *sankranti*, pilgrimage, or some difficulty or at the time of delivery can be performed even at night.

When one takes a bath at a *Tirtha*, he can have it not only for himself but also for his mother, father, wife, brother, friend or preceptor. Whomsoever he remembers at that time is said to acquire one eighth of the merit of a *Snana*. Sage Paithinasi states that one should prepare a small image of the *Darbha* grass of the person whom one intends to benefit and dip that *Darbha* image into the *Tirtha* waters, and it is said that this would give the desired merit to the absent relation or friend.

While taking a bath, even the direction which one should face, is prescribed. One is asked to face that direction, in which the stream flows. This is with regard to the *Tirthas*. In the case of *Kshetras*, one is asked to face the Sun.

After taking this bath one is asked to perform the *Tarpana* of his ancestors.

In Brahma Purana, the following are mentioned as great rivers situated in the south of Vindhya, viz., Godavari, Bhimarathi, Tungabhadra, Venika, Tapi and Payoshni. The following six others are mentioned as great rivers in the north of Vindhya; viz., Bhagirathi, Narmada, Yamuna, Saraswati, Visoka and Vihasta.

The above-mentioned twelve rivers are known as *Mahanadis*. As their designation is *Nadis*, they are supposed to be feminine. The following seven are stated to be *Nadas*, and regarded as masculine. They are : Sona Sindhu, Hiranya, Koka, Lauhitya, Gharghara and Satadru.

In Padma and Matsya Puranas, *sraddha* in the following *Tirthas* is considered as highly efficacious. These *Tirthas* are : Gaya, Prayaga, Amarkantaka, Varaha Parvata, River Ganga, Varanasi, Gangadwara, Prabhasa, Bilvaka, Nila Parvata, Kurukshetra, Kubjamra, Bhritungta, Mt. Himalaya, Kedara, River Falgu, Naimisharanya, River Sarasvati, Pushkara, River Narmada, Kusavarta, Mt. Sri Saila, Bhadra Karnaka, River Vetravati, River Godavari etc.

Vishnu Dharma sutra also gives a long list of places where *sraddhas* should be performed.

Usually one is asked to perform the *sraddha* only at his own residence and is prohibited from offering *sraddha* to his ancestors at the house of another person. But so far as *Tirthas* are concerned, they are said to belong to nobody and therefore this prohibition of not performing *sraddha* at a place not one's own does not apply to *Tirthas*. "Forests, mountains, rivers, sacred *Tirthas*, temples, sacred lakes etc. belong to nobody."

When one performs a *sraddha* at *Tirthas* he is not to offer any *arghya* or make an *avahana*. There is also no prohibition with respect to *nishiddhakala* or improper time.

In times of difficulty, when there is no fire, when one is visiting a *Tirtha*, when one is having a journey, on the birth of a son, when the wife is in her monthly course and when the sun changes a *rasi*, one may perform a *sraddha* even with uncooked food. But this is secondary and to be

performed only when cooked food or proper ingredients of cooked food are not available.

Acceptance of gift is very vehemently prohibited in the texts. "One should not accept any gift at a *Tirtha* even when one is about to die. He who accepts a gift at a *Tirtha* sells all his merit in having gone to a *Tirtha*. It is further stated that at Ganga, Gaya, Kurukshetra and Amarkantaka, he who gives a gift, shakes off his poverty and he who accepts a gift, purchases poverty for himself.

It has been specifically provided that rules regarding impurities arising out of births and deaths (*Sutaka* and *Mrita-asaucha*) do not apply when one goes to a cow-shed or to *Tirthas*, or on the occasions of great *Paryas*, or at the time of eclipses.

Before concluding this short preface on *Tirthas*, it would be proper to quote the following verses which are very relevant.

न काष्ठे विद्यते देवो न शिलायां कदाचन ।
भावे हि विद्यते देवस्तस्माद् भावे समाश्रयेत् ।
न देवः पर्वतायेषु न देवः शिवसद्मनि ।
देवश्चिदानन्दमयो हृदि भावेन दृश्यते ।

"God does not stay either in wood or in stone. He is present only when there is proper *Bhava* or devotional sentiment in the devotee. For this reason, one should have the *Bhava*." "God does not reside on the tops of mountains, in a Siva temple etc. He is Consciousness and Bliss Incarnate and is seen in one's own heart when there is proper *Bhava*."

ॐ तत् सत् ।

1. KASI

"Just as certain limbs of the body are purer than others, so are certain places on the earth more sacred—some on account of their situation, others because of their sparkling waters and others because of the association or habitation of saintly people."

—*Bhishma.*

काशेऽत्र यतो ज्योतिस्तदनाख्येयमीश्वरः ।

अतो नामापरं चास्तु काशीति प्रथितं विभो ॥

—*Skanda Purana* quoted in *Tristhalisetu.*

"THE Supreme God, the indescribable light shines (*kas*=to shine) here and it is for this reason that this place has become famous by the other name Kasi."

Kasi is the capital where Lord Sankara has elected to abide eternally.

Known also as Avimuktaka, Varanasi, Anandakanana and Mahasmasana, it is called Kasi because Supreme brilliance shines there and lights the way to *nirvana* (*kas*=to shine). It is given the name of Avimuktaka because it is free from sin (*avi*) and is never left by the Lord.

The holy place is situated between the two rivers Varana and Asi and is therefore called Varanasi. This place gives the highest delight to the Lord and is therefore named Anandakanana. The five elements lie in this great cemetery—*Mahasmasana*—as will dead bodies at the time of the final destruction.

Avimuktaka is also described in *Jabalopanishad* as the redeeming (*taraka*) Brahman who must be contemplated between the two eye-brows and the root of the nose which latter is figuratively described at Varana (forbidding demerits) and Nasi (destroying sins) respectively.

Avimuktaka is described as the circular area with a radius of 200 bow lengths from the centre of Visvanath Shrine. The Puranas say that a pilgrimage here undoubtedly gives liberation.

Veneration for Kasi has existed from time immemorial. Here holy places are to be found at every step, and it is said that there is no space without a Siva Linga. It is here that mother Ganga runs slightly north and that makes the place specially sacred.

Kasikhanda of the *Skanda Purana* describes the glory of Kasi in 15,000 verses; again and again Kasi is referred to in the Brahmanas, Upanishads, Epics and Puranas. In point of antiquity, tradition and learning it is the heart of India. Time stands still here. It is the oldest University-town with the longest continuing life in the history of the human race. Literary conquest could only find completion here. Even now Kasi keeps up its reputation for traditional lore and Sanskritic studies.

Lord Visvanath is the presiding deity here. The primeval *jiyotirlinga* of Kasi-Visveswara is believed to go back to the very beginning of the Epic and Puranic stages of Hindu culture, and it is one of the twelve famous *jiyotirlingas*. The Visveswara temple was desecrated by successive foreign invaders but was in every case restored by Hindus almost at once, and probably on the same spot. Each time it was doomed, like many other temples, and fell a victim to iconoclastic mania. This chain of destruction and restoration continued throughout the history of this temple until Sikandar Lodi, during his conquest of Banaras in A.D. 1494 completely destroyed the temple and banned further reconstruction of the temple on the old site or at any other place.

During the following seventy years Banaras was, as it were, struggling between life and death. The Hindu chief-

tains and pandits were constantly endeavouring to get the imperial ban on the reconstruction of the temple lifted but without success.

Banaras had to pass without a regular temple to its main deity during these years. Unprecedented drought and large-scale epidemics afflicted the people and their condition became most pitiable. During that season of drought even Muslim residents were said to have approached the wise and learned Narayanabhatta, a man of great austerity and learning, for divine help. He told the Muslim Ruler that the visitation and continuance of the drought was due to the absence of a regular Visveswara temple and that the imperial ban on its reconstruction should therefore be lifted at once.

The Emperor, alarmed at the magnitude of the drought, agreed to lift the ban on condition that Narayanabhatta caused due rainfall within a specified period. Narayanabhatta accepted the condition and performed a serious *anushtana* which resulted in enormous rainfall over a wide area. So, in or about A.D. 1569, the temple was rebuilt, unfortunately only to be later desecrated by Aurangzeb in A.D. 1669. The present shrine was constructed by Rani Ahalyabai, in A.D. 1783.

It is said that the water at the Lord's feet will cure normally incurable diseases and remove the worst anxieties of the faithful. Near the temple there is the *Jnana Vapi* (well of knowledge) into which the deity is supposed to have entered at the time of the temple's desecration.

Pilgrims go round Kasi in a circle of some fifty miles starting from Manikarnika; this is known as Panchakrosi.

There are five specially famous places in Kasi, apart from the Visvanath shrine. The first is the meeting place of the rivers Asi and Ganga, which is also called Lolarka—famous for its Sun-temple. The second is the meeting place

of the rivers Varana and Ganga where there is a temple of Késava. The third is the Panchaganga Ghat where the temple of Bindu-Madhava is situated. It is said that five rivers—Kiraña, Dhuta-Papa, Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati—meet here. The fourth place of importance is the Dasasvamedha Ghat. In ancient times, the Bharasiya kings used to perform Asvamedha sacrifices and after performing ten such sacrifices would take a bath at this ghat which bears an appropriate name. The famous verse says :—

एको हि कृष्णस्य कृतः प्रणामो
 दशाश्वमेधावमृथेन तुल्यः ।
 दशाश्वमेधो पुनरेति जन्म
 कृष्णप्रणामी न पुनर्मेवाय ॥

“One salutation to Lord Krishna is equal in merit to a bath after ten Asvamedha sacrifices. The only difference is that after a long stay in heaven, the person with the merit of this rare bath is reborn to this earth, while one who has saluted Lord Krishna has no rebirth.”

Last but not the least is the Manikarnika Ghat. “Vishnu dug a pit with his chakra. While he was performing severe penance, the pit was filled with His perspiration. Siva in admiration shook his head and his jewelled ear ornament fell into this pit. This is why it is called Manikarnika”. He who dies here is given in his ear the Taraka Mantra by Siva, which fulfils all desires and gives liberation.

The story goes that once when sage Vyasa was hungry he was denied alms in Kasi and was about to curse it saying that learning, wealth and friendship would not flourish there for more than three generations, when Siva took compassion on Kasi, became a householder and pacified Vyasa by giving him good food and so turned aside the curse.

Even in the sixteenth century Narayanabhatta declared that there was no question of untouchability in the Visvanath Temple. "In the Kali age, all demerit that may arise from touching untouchable objects is removed by Lord Siva himself who, in His mercy, takes a daily bath at Manikarnika in the early hours of the day for the benefit of humanity".

ब्राह्मो मुहूर्ते मणिकर्णिकायां
स्नात्वा समाराधयति स्वमेव ।
अस्पृश्यसंस्पर्शविशोचनाय
कलौ नराणां कृपया हिताय ।

—*Tristhalisetu* quoting *Sanatkumar Samhita*.

It is said that one may be a Brahmana or a Chandala, lettered or unlettered; after a dip in the Manikarnika all are equally entitled to liberation.

People with faith desire to spend their old age here. To die in Kasi liberates one from the wheel of transmigration.

Millions for countless generations, have considered and still consider Kasi Visveswara's *darshana* the highest goal of life. They came here and continue to come from far and near. The deity of Visvesvara—Lord of the Universe—has stood firm in Kasi for ages receiving the devotion of all India.

King Divodasa is taken to be the founder of Kasi. Satanika, son of Satrajit, had captured the sacrificial horse of the Kasis. Balaki Gargya assured King Ajatasatru of Kasi that he would teach Brahman to the latter. The Mahabhashya of Patanjali refers to Varanasi as situated on the bank of river Ganga. Buddhist works mention Varanasi as a great and well-known city. Buddha preached his doctrines for the first time and set in motion the wheel of Law at Banaras in Mrigadava or Isipatan or Sarnath.

Just as Kasi is known by the other names of *Varanasi*, *Avimuktaka*, *Anandakanana* and *Mahasmasana*, it is stated in *Yuvanajaya Jataka* that it was also known as *Surandhana*, *Sudarsana*, *Brahma Vardhana*, *Puspavati* and *Ramya*. Kasi was the name of the country and Varanasi was its capital. In the days of Buddha, Kasi was a part of the Kosala Kingdom. Hiuen Tsang visited Varanasi in the 7th century. He writes "In the capital there are 20 Deva temples, the towers and halls of which are of sculptured stone and cut wood. The foliage of trees combines to shade the sites whilst pure streams of water encircle them. The statue of Deva Maheswara, made of teoushih (brass) is somewhat less than 100 feet high. Its appearance is grave and majestic and appears as though really living".

On the Panchaganga Ghat stood formerly a great temple of Siva which Aurangazeb destroyed and Havell states that this temple of Siva was perhaps the same which in ancient times was described by Hiuen Tsang as made of stone skilfully carved and of richly painted wood, containing a brazen image of Mahadeva a hundred feet high, "grave and majestic, filling the spectator with awe, and seeming as if it were alive." The five flights of steps of the Panchaganga Ghat would then appropriately symbolise the five sacred rivers flowing from the Himalayan heights.

Out of the various sacred places of Varanasi *Padma Purana* mentions those of Visvesvara, Bindumadhava, Manikarnika and Jnana Vapi. *Siva Purana* mentions Tilabhandesvara Mahadeva and Dasasvamedhesvara. The Manikarnika Ghat is associated with King Harischandra of Ayodhya who was tested by Sage Visvamitra of his faith in Truth and who had become a slave of a chandala to pay off his debt. Varanasi has one of the ancient Sakti Peethas. Out of the various limbs of Sati it is stated that the left

hand had fallen at Varanasi and according to one view Goddess Annapurna and according to another Goddess Visalakshi represents that Sakti Peetha.

Stay at Kasi is considered highly meritorious. The ancient Hindu Universities at Kasi and Takshasila were well-known. It was recommended that one should particularly spend here the latter part of one's life till death. The *Kshetra Sanyasa* is also done by some people. It means that they take a vow in the presence of the deity that they will under no circumstances go beyond five *Krosas* of Lord Visvesvara.

करिष्ये क्षेत्रसन्यासमिति सञ्चित्तयेद् बुधः ।

पञ्चक्रोशद् बहिः क्षेत्रात् गच्छाम्यम्बिकापते ॥

—*Tirtha Prakasa*, p. 165.

Visvesvara is the lord of Kasi, Bhairava is stated to be the kotwal and Dhundhiraja is the state officer. The temple of Goddess Annapurna is situated near that of Visvesvara and to the west of Akshayavata. In a small lane nearby is the temple of Dhundhiraja Ganapati. The mosque near Jnana Vapi built by Aurangazeb was the site of the original old temple of Visvesvara. Near the Varana Sangama Ghat is situated the temple of Adi Kesava. Near the Rajghat station of Banaras is situated the ghat known as Rajghat. At this place there was the great fort of Kasi which was destroyed by Mahmood of Gazni. The temple of Bindu Madhava is situated on the Panchaganga Ghat and that of Lakshman Bala or Venkatesa on the Lakshman Bala Ghat. In a small lane near the mosque of Aurangazeb is the famous place known as *Kasi Karvat* where the faithful used to commit religious suicide. In the Bhairavanath Lane is the famous temple of Kala Bhairava.

Kasi is one of the three most sacred places of Hindu Pilgrimage, the other two being Prayaga and Gaya. The three together are known as Tristhali and Narayanabhata's

Trishthalisetu describes them in detail.

While having the *darsana* of Visvesvara *Padma Purana* says that one should contemplate in his mind the image of the Lord as follows :

अकलङ्कशरत्पूर्णशशाङ्कामृतसप्रभः ।

सोमसूर्याग्निनयनो दशबाहुः शशाङ्कभृत् ।

गौरीपरीरब्धतनुर्नानायुधसमुज्ज्वलः ।

—*Padma* as quoted in *Tirtha Prakasa*.

“Lord Visvesvara has the lustre of ten thousand spotless full-moons of the Sarad season. He has three eyes of the Moon, the Sun and the Fire ; has ten hands ; has the crest ornament of the crescent moon ; is embraced by His consort Gauri and is resplendent with numerous divine Ayudhas.”

Kasikhanda states :

त्रैलोक्यनगरे वात्र काशी राजगहं मम ।

“Lord Siva says that the three worlds form one city of mine and Kasi is my Royal Palace therein.”

2. RAMESWARAM

"Performance of sacrifices is an elaborate affair involving heavy expenditure which only the princely and the rich can afford—not those without wealth, equipment, wife, or priests. Tirtha can be accomplished by all, even the poor, and therefore excels in merit even the best of sacrifices."

—*Mahabharata*.

ONE of the *Tevaras* sung in the temple of Rameswaram reads :—

"Sita, daughter of King Videha, mistook the Rakshasa who came to entrap her in disguise as the golden deer; she knew him not. But all was well in the end, for as a result of this Sri Rameswara was installed and established here for ever."

In the State of Madras, in the District Ramnad, is the island of Rameswaram in the gulf of Mannar at the southernmost point of India, where the Bay of Bengal meets the Arabian Sea. This island, 31 miles long and 7 miles wide, is described in the Puranas as the Gandhamadana Hill. It is one of the most highly venerated places in India. It derives its name from Sri Rama who installed one of the twelve primæval *Jyotirlingas* of Lord Sankara here, and named it after himself. From very ancient times the temple has been considered sacred and it is universally worshipped by all sects. It typifies the cultural unity of India, to describe which the phrase invariably used is "From the Himalayas to Setu Rameswaram".

Accompanied by the army of Sugriva, Rama came here in search of Sita. To follow Ravana, they had to cross the sea which was 100 *yojanas* across. Rama began to propitiate the sea and fasted for three days but the sea

would not give in. Rama threatened in his anger to dry it up with powerful missiles. The terrified sea appeared in person and argued that Rama should not ask the sea to violate the laws of nature and give up its inherent quality of impenetrability and advised him that, if necessary, Rama should have a bridge constructed. Rama agreed with this argument. Nala, the great architect and engineer, reputed to be the son of Visvakarma, was immediately called for, and with his technical skill, he made whatever was used, be it wood or stone, float over the water. A bridge 10 *yojanas* in width and 100 *yojanas* in length was soon completed by Nala under Rama's command.

It is said Rama never drank water without first having the *darshana* of Lord Sankara. Having come to this seashore in search of Sita, he was about to drink water, but was reminded that he should have his usual *darshana* first. He, therefore, prepared an earthen image of Siva, propitiated the same, and was blessed by Him.

After winning the water and destroying Ravana, he came back to this Gandhamadana Hill from Lanka. Sita went through the fire ordeal to prove her purity. Then Agastya and other sages requested Rama to perform an expiatory rite or *Prayaschitta* for having killed Ravana who was after all a Brahmin and the grandson of Sage Pulastya. This was to take the form of establishing a *Jyotirlinga* of Lord Siva. Rama asked Hanuman to go to Kailasa immediately and to request Siva himself to give an appropriate image. Hanuman went to Kailasa, but as he could not secure the desired image, he began to perform a penance. At the other extreme of India, Rama and the sages, after waiting sufficiently long for Hanuman to return, decided that the auspicious time should not be missed. They therefore accepted a Sivalinga prepared by Sita out of sand and both Sita and Ramn installed the

Jyotirlinga, known as Rameswara, on Wednesday, *Jyesta Shukla 10th*, when the Moon was in *Hasta* and the Sun in *Taurus*. Shortly afterwards Hanuman returned with a *Sivalinga* from *Kailasa*. Finding that Rama had not waited for him, he became sad, irritated and even angry. On seeing his stubborn mood Rama asked Hanuman to throw out the *linga* that he, Rama had installed and to replace it by the one he had brought himself. Hanuman tried with all his might to do this, but he failed. Ultimately Rama consoled him by establishing the *linga* brought by Hanuman by the side of Rameswara and announced that before worshipping Rameswara, people would worship the *linga* brought by Hanuman, which thereafter was known as *Kasi Visvanath*. The practice of worshipping it first continues to this day.

Vibhisana, Rama's ally, was placed on *Ravana's* throne as King of *Lanka*. He expressed his fear to Rama that less considerate kings would invade *Lanka* by the very same bridge that Rama had constructed. To oblige his friend and make *Lanka* less vulnerable to attack, Rama destroyed the bridge himself with the end of his bow a *Dhanuskodi* which is 12 miles away from Rameswaram. This reminds us of the modern practice of the 'scorched earth' policy.

It is considered highly meritorious to pour *Ganges* water on Lord Rameswara. There are many who bring water direct from the *Ganges*, walking bare-foot all the distance of several hundred miles. Those who cannot bring the water in that way, purchase it from their priests at a very high price as if they were purchasing *attar* or perfumed oil. A sight of the Lord is said to have the power to destroy a sin as grave as or akin to that of *Brahmahatya*. Among the sins akin to that of *Brahmahatya* are described. "One proving treacherous on the way, one selfishly

cooking his own food alone, one defaming the saintly and the learned, one eating too much (to the exclusion of others), and one selling knowledge."

Rama was cleansed of the sin of killing Ravana. Kalabhairava, who cut off the fifth head of Brahma, had to do penance by taking a bath here at Sivatirtha. Krishna killed his maternal uncle Kamsa, and bathed here at Kotitirtha as *prayaschitta*. A bath at Dhanuskodi is specially beneficial in Magha when the sun is in Capricorn or when there is an eclipse.

Near Rameswaram temple there is a Vaishnavite shrine of Setu Madhava. It is said that Vishnu became a Brahmin called Setu Madhava and secretly loved Gunanidhi, the daughter of a Pandya king and married her. She was supposed to be an incarnation of Lakshmi. The king imprisoned Setu Madhava, but subsequently came to know that he was Vishnu's incarnation. A temple was then erected for him.

Malik Kafur is said to have reached Rameswaram in A.D. 1311 and constructed a mosque on the island. The place where the Rameswaram temple is situated was originally in the zamindari of Sethupathis or the Rajas of Ramnad, who had made large endowments to provide for its worship. The main temples are said to have been built by Udaiyan Sethupathi with the help of the Ceylon Prince Pararaja Sekara in A.D. 1414. The north and the south unfinished *gopurams* are ascribed to Kirana Rayar of the Deccan of about A.D. 1420. The western *gopuram* is said to be the work of Udaiyan Sethupathi, the southern one of Tirumalai Sethupathi and the eastern one of Dalavai Sethupathi. The entire temple-construction extends over a period of about 350 years and is endowed almost exclusively by the Sethupathi family. Seventy-two villages were granted for its maintenance, especially for the elabo-

rate worship at the temple; most of these were granted by the Ramnad zamindari. Status of the Rajas and other donors have been carved on the *mandapams* and *prakarams*.

The temple of Rameswaram is on the eastern coast of the island. The buildings are very large, surrounded by high walls on all four sides. They cover an area of about 865 feet from east to west by 657 feet from north to south. There are three unfinished *gopurams* on the east, south and north sides and one completed *gopuram* about 78 feet high on the western [side. There are three *prakarams* or enclosures containing great corridors and pillars which are the most imposing features of this shrine. In the innermost enclosure are seated the deity Ramalingaswami (Rameswara) and his consort Parvatavardini Amman as also Visvanathaswami and his consort Visalakshi Amman. Nearby there is the Garuda *stambha*, with golden plates. The Nandi is quite big. 12 x 8 x 9 feet. The two oceans on the east and west sides are called Ratnakar and Mahodadhi. Their images are also installed. There is another image of one bareheaded Harbola "who each night destroyed the bridge of Rama when it was under construction and who was ultimately detected and arrested by Hanuman". There are several sub-tirthas in the vicinity, e.g., Madhava, Chakra, Amrita, Siva, Sarva, Koti etc. Clad in their wet clothes, the pilgrims bathe in all 24 of them, one after the other.

The corridors and pillars are most massive and majestic. They constitute the glory of this shrine. The corridors are nearly 400 feet in length and in breadth they vary from 17 to 21 feet. In height they are about 30 feet from the floor to the centre of the roof. Each pillar is made up of several parts and is "richer and more elaborate in design than those of the Parvati Porch at Chidambaram". The vast *prakarams* and elaborate *gopurams*

exhibit the peculiarities of the Dravidian style of architecture with all its merits and defects.

To understand the devotional spirit of the architects who built these massive and marvellous structures, it would be well to note the following *Tevara Unjal* or the prayer in Siva's honour sung at Sri Rameswaram :—

“The Mandara and Sundaragiri mountains are the two pillars for suspending the swing of the Lord. Mahameru and Ponmalai are the beams. The Sesha Naga becomes the cord. Jnana or wisdom is the plank. Vishnu and Brahma hold the cord and sway the swing of the Lord. Learned Brahmins chant the Vedas with due rites. The Goddess Parvatavardini sits by His side. Let us rock the swing of the Lord.”

3. KURUKSHETRA

"Those without faith, those full of sins, those with a doubting mind, those who are godless, and those indulging in bad reasoning—these five types of people can reap no benefit from any Tirtha."

—*Vayupurana*.

THE opening verse of the *Bhagavad Gita* describes how the armies of the Pandavas and Kauravas, desirous of fighting, were arrayed against each other in this Kurukshetra which is also called Dharmakshetra, the land of piety. It was here that the immortal message of Lord Krishna was conveyed to mankind as the *Gita* through Arjuna, its brave and fitting representative. It told him to do his duty and fight with a detached and harmonised mind, with full knowledge, devotion and dedication to God.

Kurukshetra is 25 miles east of Ambala on the Delhi-Ambala line. The city of Thanewar is one mile from Kurukshetra. Panipat is 55 miles from Delhi and is a Taluka town in the Karnal District. This sacred place has a history dating from hoary antiquity. A certain king Kurusravana is referred to in the *Rigveda*. In the time of the *Brahmanas*, Kurukshetra acquired a great reputation and became the holy land. This place was the centre of Vedic civilisation in the Brahmanic period. The Gods performed lengthy sacrifices here and Kurukshetra was the sacrificial altar. To the south was Khandava, to the north was Turghna and behind Kurukshetra was Parinaha according to *Taittiriya Brahmana*.

From certain Rigvedic passages it appears that the river Saraswati was a large river running into the sea, and several hymns are addressed to it. However, at the time of the *Brahmanas*, the river disappeared into the sands.

The *Mahabharata* also describes how it was lost in the sands near Kurukshetra and the place is known as Vinasana. Many scholars are of the opinion that this sudden disappearance of once a mighty river was due to volcanic eruption. At present there is a river in this area which widens during periods of flood and joins another stream, and is thereafter known as the Gaggar. The Saraswati rises in the outer Himalayan range usually known as Sivalik. The source of this river is described as Plaksha Prasravana or as "springing from the Plaksh tree," and the land stretching between the source and Vinasana at Kurukshetra is called the sacred place for Saraswata Satra. Manu speaks of this Vinasana as the eastern boundary of Madhyadesa.

Since the very earliest times, the Saraswati has been the resort of pilgrims, particularly at Kurukshetra where it disappears, a place which was held as sacred even before the Mahabharata war. This holy river is described in *Rigveda* as "the purifier and source of sweet and truthful words and the inspiration of noble thoughts". This praise is also applied to Saraswati, Goddess of learning.

Before the close of the later Vedic period, Aryans had penetrated the plains of the Jumna and Ganga. The centre of Aryan culture became Madhyadesa, from the Saraswati to the Gangetic doab. The region was occupied by Kurus, Panchalas, and other tribes. The Kurus had their capital at Asandivat and the Panchalas at Kampilya. The land between Saraswati and Drisadvati was called Kurukshetra and was occupied by the Kurus. The later Vedic texts mention such Kuru kings as Balhika Pratipiya, Parikshit, and Janamejaya. Parikshit is described as a Raja Viswanina or Universal Ruler. In due course the Vedic Aryans moved further to the east and south. Thereafter Mithila became the centre of Aryan culture. The famous

Samrat Janaka who patronised the great philosopher Yajnavalkya lived there.

It is said that King Kuru, son of Samvarana, ploughed this piece of land with a golden plough for seven *krosas* so that this field of Kuru became known as Kurukshetra. He performed a great penance and continued to plough with the intention that all who died there should be received into heaven. Indra came to him many times and laughed at such an idea. Gradually Indra was won over, but the other gods expressed their doubts saying that death without a sacrifice did not merit a place in heaven. Kuru and Indra arrived at a compromise and decided that Indra should admit into heaven those who died at this place either while performing a penance or while fighting on this battlefield. So this place has become both a battlefield and a land of piety. 'Kurukshetra' has become a synonym for 'battlefield', and it is also a Dharmakshetra.

The sons of Pandu claimed a legitimate share of their paternal kingdom from their uncle Dhritarashtra and his sons. They were given the Khandava forest to the south of the Kuru kingdom where the Pandavas built a magnificent city called Indraprastha, near modern Delhi. The Kauravas retained Hastinapura situated to the north-east of Delhi as their capital in the Kuru Desa. After being exiled for 13 years on account of Yudhishtira's defeat in a game of dice, the Pandavas again demanded the return of their kingdom. As a result of the refusal by the Kauravas, there was a fierce and deadly campaign on the battlefield of Kurukshetra lasting for 18 days. Krishna called upon hesitant Arjuna to do his duty and fight. The Pandavas won the war but lost everything else. There was a heavy massacre and veteran warriors together with huge armies consisting of several *akshauhini senas* were destroyed.

Yudhishtira realised the truth that those who were vanquished had won and those who had won were vanquished.

The Mahabharata war has been given various dates from 1193 B.C. to 3101 B.C. The astronomical data given in the *Mahabharata* is of a conflicting nature. Tradition accepts 3101 B.C. as the date of the war coinciding with the beginning of the Kali Age. *Brihatsamhita* of Varahamihira states that the Saka era is 2526 years after Yudhishtira era and this would mean that the Mahabharata war was fought in the year 2449 B.C.

In the Vanaparva of the *Mahabharata* Ch. 83, Kurukshetra is described to the desolate King Yudhishtira as a very holy place. The limits of this place are stated to be south of Saraswati and north of Drisadvati. Those who lived there were stated to be as fortunate as those who dwell in paradise. Vanaparva calls it Brahnavarta. Manu calls it as part of Brahmarshidesa which comes next in merit to Brahnavarta. It was called the northern Veda of Brahma (Uttara Veda of Pitamaha). There are five such Vedas of Brahma—one in Kurukshetra and the other four in Prayaga, Gayasiras, Viraja, and Pushkara. It is also called the Ramahrida or the lake of Parasurama or Samanta-Panchaka. The legend tells how the Kshatriyas murdered Jamadagni, the father of Parasurama, and how the latter while taking his revenge, killed so many of them here that five big pools were filled with blood. After performing penance, Parasurama satisfied the Pitris and asked to be forgiven for the sin of killing such a great number of people. The Pitris forgave him and blessed him and converted those pools of blood into pools of holy water. "Whoever observes a vow of celibacy, bathes here and worships Parasurama becomes very wealthy". This place is also known as Kurujangala.

The Puranas mention seven forests round about

Kurukshetra which are considered holy (1) Kamyaka Vana, (2) Aditi Vana, (3) Vyasavana, (4) Phalakivana, (5) Suryavana, (6) Madhuvana and (7) Sitavana.

Kurukshetra is also known as Sannihati "because all tirthas gather together here every month on the Amavasya day".

Vanaparva 83—208 describes this place as "lying between the spots known as Tadrantuka and Arantuka and between Machakruka Yaksha's temple and Parasurama's pools—this is Kurukshetra, the Samanta-panchaka and Brahma's northern Vedi".

Lord Krishna is said to have performed sacrifices here for 12 years. Before their separation, King Pururavas met his beloved Urvasi at this place. It was the dwelling of Sanatkumar and Dharmaraja. It is considered a fit and holy place for the performance of *śraddha*.

More than one hundred sub-tirthas are mentioned in and around Kurukshetra. The *Mahabharata* says "even one who expresses an intention saying "I shall go and abide at Kurukshetra" becomes free from sin. Should the dust of this place, carried in the air by the wind, touch a person it is capable of emancipating him."

Here is the Varaha Tirtha where Vishnu stood in His incarnation of the boar.

A little further on is the Vyasasthali where Vyasa resolved to die of grief for his son, Suka. The Gods intervened, persuaded Vyasa to give up his resolution and thus saved his life.

Further on there is one Tirtha which is described as Sapta-Saraswata. Once a Rishi named Mankanaka stayed here. A point of Kusa grass pricked his hand and lo! instead of blood, there was vegetable juice flowing from his hand! On seeing this peculiar sight, the Rishi went mad with joy and began to dance. The contagion spread wide-

ly and everything round about, objects both movable and immovable, began to dance with the Rishi who was overjoyed. Brahma and other gods saw the sight with wonder and fright and requested Siva to stop this strange dance. Siva came down and talked to the sage very gently: "What is the cause of this dance? What has given you such joy?" The Rishi replied: "Do you not see the vegetable juice flowing from my hand? That sight gives me joy and I dance". Siva said: "What is so wonderful about it? Look here! I am piercing my hand with my nail; see that from the wound snow-white Bhasma is coming out." Rishi Mankana was aghast, he was ashamed, and gave up dancing. Siva's mission had succeeded and perhaps the sage was hypnotised and cured of his malady.

Then there is Brahma—saras where King Kuru was staying when he performed his penance as an ascetic

There is Chakra Tirtha where Lord Krishna was obliged by Bhishma to take the discus in His hand to attack him.

The Asthipura was the place where the bodies of the great warriors killed in the Mahabharata war were cremated.

Then there is the famous Prithudaka Tirtha. It is said that Kurukshetra is holy; still more holy is the river Saraswati and the tirthas found here. The holiest of them all is Prithudaka, which is modern Pehoa in the Karnal District.

There is the tirtha called Taijasa, a shrine of Varuna, where Brahma and the other gods installed Kartikeya as the Commander-in-Chief of the army of the gods.

Anyone who bathes, performs *sraddha*, and gives *dana* in the Sannihati Tirtha on a day of solar eclipse, receives benefit equal to having performed 100 Asvamedha sacrifices. It is also called Rudra Hrida.

In later history also, Thaneswar, the heart of Kurukshetra, became a centre of activities as well as being a battlefield. In the seventh century, Graha-Varman, the Maukhari ruler and son of Avanti-Varman, was killed by the Malva ruler. Graha-Varman was married to Rajyasree, daughter of Prabhakara-Vardhana of the Pushyabhuti family of Thaneswar and sister of Rajya-Vardhana and Harsha. On the death of Graha-Varman his widowed Maukhari queen Rajyasree was imprisoned at Kanauj. The death of his sister's husband was avenged by Rajya-Vardhana, but he was lured into a trap by the Gauda king and killed. Harsha, the younger brother of Rajya-Vardhana, was proclaimed king in A. D. 606. Harsha secured his sister's release, strengthened and consolidated his position and assumed full titles in A.D. 612. Bana has immortalised his patron Harsha in his *Harshacharita*. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese Master of Law, visited Emperor Harsha's Court at the imperial capital Kanauj. Two grand and impressive assemblies were held at this time, one at Kanauj, and the other at Prayaga, to exhibit the refinements of Buddhism and to felicitate the Chinese Master of Law and these international gatherings were largely attended by numerous kings and thousands of Buddhist, Brahman and Jain philosophers.

In A.D. 1014, Mahmud of Ghazni took Thaneswar and destroyed its temples.

Babar proceeded against Ibrahim Lodi who was then a nominal ruler of the truncated Afgan kingdom and the historic battle of Panipat (latter known as the first battle of Panipat) was fought on April 21, A.D. 1526. With the use of artillery and also on account of his superior strategy and generalship, Babar won the war and Lodi fell on the battlefield. This battle laid the foundation of Moghul power in India.

Hemu was a capable minister and general of the Afghan king Adilshah Sor who opposed the Moghuls. Hemu assumed the title of Vikramaditya and occupied Delhi and Agra. But while fighting, a chance arrow struck Hemu in the eye, he became unconscious, there was confusion in his ranks and he was killed either by Akbar or Bairam in the second historic Battle of Panipat in A.D. 1557.

Later in the 18th century, the Afghans and the Marathas were striving for supremacy in India. This culminated in the third historic war of Panipat on January 14, 1761, the very battlefield where decisive contests had been fought in former ages since the days of the Mahabharata. Abdali administered a setback to Dattaji Scindia at Thaneswar in December A.D. 1759. After a few mild attacks lasting about a couple of months, the third battle of Panipat was fought, with disastrous consequences for the Marathas. This historic third battle decided the fate of India. The Marathas and Mahommedans weakened each other in this deadly war and facilitated the supremacy of the British. The seeds of the British success were sown at Plassey but they matured and struck roots, according to the historians, on this famous battlefield of Panipat.

The evidence of history shows that whoever is victorious at Panipat or Kurukshetra is destined to rule over India. Even the ambition to go to Kurukshetra is said to elevate a man; even to breathe the dust of the place, wafted by the wind, purifies the warrior. To achieve death for one's country at this place ensures a place in heaven. The pact or treaty of Indra with Kuru still stands. "Those who give up their body while performing penance here or are killed while fighting on this battlefield, Oh Rajendra! shall without doubt attain heaven".

4. PRAYAGARAJA

सितासिते सरिते यत्र सङ्गते
तत्राप्लुतासौ दिवमुत्पतन्ति ।
ये वै तन्वां विसृजन्ति धीराम्
ते जनासोऽमृतत्वं भजन्ते ॥

“THOSE who bathe at the confluence of the white and black rivers—the Ganga and Yamuna—go to heaven; those of firm mind who give up their bodies here, attain immortality.”

—*Rigveda, Khila, (Aswalayana)*

This Rigvedic quotation is enough to establish the sanctity and traditional importance of this place from time immemorial.

“The land between the Ganga and the Yamuna is called the waist, the middle part of the earth; and Prayaga which is the most sacred, luxuriant and prosperous place is the fertile part of mother earth,” says Sage Pulastya in the *Mahabharata* (Vanaparva). Grandfather Prajapati or Brahma performed a great sacrifice here; the place is therefore called Prayaga (*Yaj*, to sacrifice). This was the greatest of all sacrifices, as is signified by the preposition *Pra*. The prefix *Pra* and the suffix *Raja* in the word *Prayagaraja* indicate the superiority as Tirtharaja of this place over all other Tirthas. This is the *Madhya* or the middle *Vedi*, the sacrificial altar of Brahma, out of five such *Vedis* on the earth, the other four being at Kurukshetra, Gayashiras, Viraja and Pushkara. It is also known as the Prajapati Kshetra. The three rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati (the latter in its concealed or underground form) meet here and therefore this Tirtha

is also known as Triveni. The Saraswati, flowing underground, is supposed to go from here to Pushkara.

The very sight of this Kshetra, the pronouncement of its name or the application of its clay on the body is considered enough to free one from sin. This Tirtharaja is "dear to Kesava."

In the *Ramayana*, Prayaga is referred to as a forest area cut off from the resources of civilization and having within it a small clearing about a *Krosa* or 2 miles in extent. In this area was the *ashrama* or hermitage of Sage Bharadwaja where Rama came when in exile.

The way in which Rama came into exile to Prayaga is described in the *Ramayana* thus: Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana left Ayodhya on the west bank of the river Sarayu in a chariot. They reached the river Tamasa on which stood the hermitage of Sage Valmiki. They then crossed Shrimati Mahanadi, (identified as the Sarayu by Pargiter), reached the Kosalas, crossed the river Vedasruti, (identified as the 'Chuka' by Pragiter and the 'Kali' by Lassen), went to the Agastya region and then travelled for a long time and crossed the rivers Gomati and Sarpika (Sai, a tributary of the Gomati). Then they saw the wide land given by King Manu to Ikshvaku. They passed the forest of Sarayu and came to Sringiverapura (Singhrror) on the Ganges, about twenty-two miles north-west of Prayaga. There they dismissed their charioteer as they were entering upon a difficult road. At Sringiverapura the Nishada king, Guha, was reigning and he received them with warm affection. With Guha's help, Rama crossed the Ganges. This incident has been poetically described with great devotional fervour. Guha and Rama are both called sailor-captains, one for crossing the Ganges, the other for crossing the ocean of births.

After crossing the Ganges, Rama entered the Prayaga

forest, which is described as difficult to penetrate, and after one day's journey they reached the place in Prayaga where the hermitage of the Sage Bharadwaja lay. From here they had to cross the river by raft, for boats were not available in this forest area. Directed by Sage Bharadwaja, Rama and his companions came to Mount Chitrakuta about sixty-five miles south-west of Prayaga.

After the Mahabharata war was over Yudishthira was installed as the Emperor of Bharata in Hastinapura; he was extremely grieved over the destruction of his family and the Kaurava cousins, particularly Duryodhana the lord of eleven *Aksauhini Senas*. Bhishma, Drona, and Karna, were all dead. The five brothers and their friend Vasudeva were the only survivors. Yudishtira felt a sense of guilt, sin and frustration. Sage Markandeya was then at Varanasi and when he heard of Yudishthira's sadness, he came down to Hastinapura and was received with great veneration by the Emperor; the Sage consoled him and then advised him to undertake a journey to Prayaga so that he might attain mental peace and freedom from sin. It is said that every step taken in Prayaga by the faithful is as rewarding as the performance of an Ashwamedha sacrifice.

These are the limits of Prayaga described in *Matsya Purana*: "To the east of the Ganges from Pratishtana (also known as Samudra Kupta) to the Pool of Vasuki in the north; from the Kambala and Asvatara Nagas in the West to Bahumulaka in the South". This area in the form of a square is the sacrificial altar of Prajapati. "Prayaga Mandala" is a larger area than "Prayaga" and is described as a circle of radius one-and-a-half *Yojanas* round the Brahma Yupa or sacrificial post; it is also measured as five *Yojanas* in circumference. Veni or Triveni is within Prayaga, twenty bow-lengths from the *Sangama* or confluence.

Triveni is identified with the Mystic Syllable AUM (OM) with its components A, U and M representing Saraswati, Yamuna and Ganga respectively.

It is said that Prayaga will not be destroyed even at the time of the great deluge or the Pralaya and that Vishnu abides here in the form of the Yoga Murti. At the final destruction, when everywhere is flooded, Vishnu will stay here on the leaf of the Vata tree in the form of a child. All the gods, Siddhas and sages have stayed here and chosen to protect it. Brahma stays to the north Pratishtana, Vishnu stays here in the form of Veni Madhava, and Siva as the ancient Akshaya Vata, the immortal Vata tree. In order to attain the fulfilment of all desires it is prescribed that one should stay and bathe at Prayaga for one month, worship the deities and satisfy one's ancestors with the performance of *Sraddha*. *Sraddha* performed at this and other Tirthas is valued most highly by one's ancestors. A gift of a Kapila (tawny) cow, properly decked with clothes and ornaments, is considered of great value. Arsha is one of the eight forms of marriage; and to achieve merit it is recommended that one should give away one's daughter in marriage in the Arsha form at Prayaga.

It is stated that Sudyumna, son of King Vaivaswata, went to the prohibited area of Kumaravana here and was changed into a woman. He was then called Ila, and through Chandra's son Budha he had a son named Pururavas. Ila worshipped Siva who granted him the boon that he should become a man for one month and woman for the next, alternately. Ila, however, was disgusted with this process, and handed over the kingdom to Pururavas and became an ascetic. (Bhagavath 9-1) Pururavas ruled at Pratishtana and was in turn succeeded by Ayu, his son Nahusa and then by his famous son Yayati.

A bath in Triveni in the month of Magha is consider-

ed a rare occurrence and a thing to be coveted even by the deities. The *mantra* to be repeated is "In this month of Magha when the Sun is in Capricorn, let this bath fill me with grace. I repeat Govinda! Achyuta! Madhava!" Triveni is about a mile and a half from the city of Allahabad. The bath is taken from the island at the confluence. For the *Maghasnana* (bath in the month of Magha), the day when the Sun enters into Capricorn and the new-moon day are the most auspicious.

The famous Kumbha Mela takes place in Prayaga every twelve years, when Jupiter is in Taurus. It is held in Nasik, Ujjain and Haradwara when Jupiter is in Leo, Scorpio and Aquarius respectively. The legend about the *Kumbha* is that Brihaspati, the preceptor of the Gods, ran away with the *Kumbha*, or pot full of nectar, as it emerged from the churning of the Ocean. Asuras ran after him. During the heat of the chase, the *Kumbha* overflowed and drops fell at these four places. *Maghasnana* in this *Kumbha* is of great merit. Kumbha was held as usual at Prayaga in 1954, with Jupiter in Taurus, when millions bathed on Makara Sankrati, Ratha Saptami, the full-moon day and the new-moon day. Sadhus of all sects came here on this occasion, when there was a parliament of religions. Nagas also came in their thousands.

It is said that one should have a shave or tonsure at Prayaga, offer Pindas to one's ancestors at Gaya, make offerings at Kurukshetra and give up one's body at Kasi. It is added moreover that if one's head is shaved at Prayaga, what is the need for the other three at Gaya, Kurukshetra, or Kasi? This latter statement is taken only as an Arthavada or glorification. Men and widows are shaved, men offering their moustaches and beards as well. Married women have their tresses cut about two finger breadths. The fallen hair is then thrown in the *Sangama*.

Triveni is also called Veni because the Ganges takes a turn here and bends like the *Veni* (braided hair) of a woman.

The immortal tree or the Aksaya Vata is situated in a dark chamber in the fort of Allahabad. It is worshipped with oil, *sindura*, *torana* flowers etc. Nearby is a Sivalinga. After Puja and the Parikrama or moving around, people embrace it. Pilgrims take a vow here to give up for the rest of their lives the pleasure of eating one particular type of food.

At Triveni or at the Aksaya Vata there has been a tradition from olden times of committing religious suicide. In the works of Dharma-Shastra, suicide in general is forbidden and both homicide and suicide are placed on an equal footing and condemned; Manu denies water libations (*udaka-kriya*) to those who commit suicide; there are also Vedic texts which condemn the "Atmahan" people; but the practice persisted in spite of this. It was encouraged by a faith in Tirthas, disgust of the world, incapacity, frustration or even a sense of Yogic satiation, and the magnetic lure of majestic nature in mountains, forests, or mighty rivers. In spite of Vedic prohibition and many dissuading voices, the practice was in vogue, as is seen from advice given to Yudishthira in the *Vanaparva*. Though suicide in general is discouraged, certain exceptions are tolerated and even recommended. Those guilty of Mahapatakas were recommended to carry out this kind of penance or *Prayaschitta*. Those unable to perform religious duties or those suffering from incurable diseases took this course. Old and incapacitated people, those having no further ambition, those convinced of the impermanence of the world, and a Sati—they also followed this path. Suicide could be committed in various ways; by falling from a precipice, entering a fire prepared from cowdung cakes, or by starting on an endless journey on foot in the

Himalayas, as was done by the Pandavas. It could also be achieved by drowning in the Ganges head-first, fasting unto death, falling from the Aksaya Vata at Prayaga, or cutting off parts of one's body and throwing them to the birds. This last practice was also noted by Hiuen Tsang. This tradition of religious suicide at Prayaga was also extended to other Tirthas.

Many authors did not agree with this practice. It was laid down that those with the responsibility of a family or other duties should not shirk them. This course was also forbidden for a pregnant woman. Some say it is forbidden to Brahmins. While some hold that at the time of death God utters the mystic Taraka *mantra* "OM" thus liberating the victim, many hold that liberation is never possible without true knowledge. Kalidasa poetically refers to the first view. The greatest prohibition of this practice is contained in the list of what are known as *Kali-varjyas* i.e. items prohibited in the present Kali age.

Prayaga was included in the Gupta empire. The famous Allahabad pillar inscription contains the Prasasti of poet Harishena of Emperor Samudra Gupta (A.D. 320 to 380). It gives a very detailed and authentic picture of the poet's patron and an account of his conquests. Prayaga was also a part of Harsha's empire. Two international gatherings took place in Harsha's reign, one at Prayaga and the other at Kanauj. In the eleventh century the Kalachuri King Gangeyadeva assumed the title of Vikramaditya and took Prayaga and Kasi under his protection. It was first conquered by Muslims in A.D. 1194, under Sahab-ud-din Ghorî. In the 14th century the famous saint and poet Ramananda was born here. He preached Bhakti to all classes, creeds, and sexes. Among his twelve pupils were a barber, a Mahomedan, and a few women. Kabir was said to have been Ramananda's

pupil. Prayaga was renovated and rebuilt by Akbar. The fort at the junction of the two rivers was built in A.D. 1583 and the name Allahabad was given to it by Akbar in A.D. 1584.

In A.D. 1770-1, Warren Hastings took Kora and Allahabad away from the Moghul emperor who was accused of having accepted Maratha patronage, and gave them to the Nawab of Oudh in return for fifty lakhs and an annual subsidy. In A.D. 1801 Lord Wellesley made Oudh "a protected feudatory State" by special treaty and on 13th February 1855, Outram proclaimed the annexation of Oudh for "the good of the governed." In the "Mutiny" of A.D. 1857 places of strategic importance like Delhi and Allahabad were taken by sepoys. On 1st November 1858 Lord Canning held a Darbar at Allahabad and the famous proclamation of the Queen was read out. A policy of justice, toleration and impartial administration was promised to the people.

This is Prayaga, the big modern city of Allahabad, the second capital of Uttara Pradesh, the city of the Swarjaya Bhavan. From the magnificent Himalayas two mighty rivers flow separately and mingle their black and white waters at this place. Kalidasa could not miss this majestic sight. Rama describes this place to Sita on his return journey from Lanka in the thirteenth Canto of *Raghuvamsa*: "The waters of Yamuna mix with those of Ganga, like the combination of emeralds and pearls, like a garland of black and white lotuses, like the rows of blue and white Hansa birds or a design of *chandana* mixed with that of black *aguru*; like moonlight mixed with darkness or dark areas of the sky among the white clouds seen in the *Sharad* season or like the white body of Lord Sankara, besmeared with ashes, having ornaments of black serpents."

Kalidasa adds :

समुद्रपत्न्यो जलसन्निपाते
 पूतात्मनामत्र किलाभिषेकात् ।
 तत्त्वावबोधेन विनाऽपि भूयस्
 तनुत्यजां नास्ति शरीरबन्धः ।

“In the case of those who give up their bodies after purifying themselves at Prayag by bathing at the confluence of these two rivers—Ganga and Yamuna—the two wives of the ocean—there is no bondage of another body in a future birth and this liberation is achieved even without philosophic knowledge”.

—*Raghuvamsa* 13-58.

5. GAYĀ

इदं विष्णुर्विचक्रमे त्रेवा निदधे पदम् । समूहमस्य पांसुरे ।

—*Rigveda*, 1-22-17.

"VISHNU crossed this and placed his foot in three ways; the whole of it is encompoused in his steps". This passage of *Rigveda* is commented upon by Yaska (800 B.C.) in his *Nirukta*. He says: "According to one author, Sakapuni, the three steps of Vishnu are the earth, the firmament, and the heaven; while according to another author, Aurnavabha, the three steps of Vishnu are at three places called Samarohana, Vishnupada, and Gaya-shiras". It is correct to presume that all the three places are situated at Gaya.

Therefore, some people maintain that long before the time of Yaska and his predecessor Aurnavabha, Gaya was the location of the three steps of Vishnu and was famous as a Vishnu Tirtha. This also proves the pre-Buddhistic importance of the place. The area round about Gaya is also famous as a sacred spot of pilgrimage for Buddhists, where Buddha received enlightenment under the Bodhi tree.

Tristhali is the name given to the three most holy places of pilgrimages for Hindus, Prayaga, Kasi and Gaya. The *Tristhali Setu* of the famous Narayana Bhatta describes them in considerable detail.

Gaya is 192 miles from Calcutta and 127 miles from Banaras. The town consists of old Gaya and the new Sahibganj which is the railway station.

Mahabharata (Vanaparva) says: "A man should aspire to have many sons; the reason is that one of them may go to Gaya (and liberate the ancestors by offering them *Pindas*) or may perform an *Asvamedha* sacrifice or may let loose a Nila Bull. At Gaya there is the Phalgu river.

the place known as Gaya-shiras, and the imperishable Banyan Tree. Food offered to ancestors at this place yields never-ending results”.

The greatness of Gaya is described in *Mahabharata*, *Naradiya*, *Padma*, *Kurma*, *Varaha*, *Garuda* etc. and above all, in *Vayu*. *Vayupurana*, in its concluding chapters 105-112, deals exhaustively with the subject. *Vayu* is considered as one of the oldest Puranas (300 to 600 A.D.) and its *Gaya Mahatmya*, a later addition of 700 to 1000 A.D.

It is said that liberation or *Mukti* is achieved in four ways. The first way is by acquiring the true knowledge of Brahman. The second is by the performance of *Sraddha* at Gaya. The third way is by getting oneself killed by protecting a cow and the fourth is by residing at *Kuru-kshetra* (*Garuda*)

Gaya is named after the Asura of the same name. The legend is that Gaya, a devotee of Vishnu, was a very powerful, yet pious, Asura 125 *yojanas* high and 60 *yojanas* wide. He practised severe penance on the Kolahala Mount. Gods were worried, went to Siva and ultimately to Vishnu. The latter however went to Gaya and granted him boon that he would be so pure that any one touching him would go to Hari's abode. This led to the kingdom of Yama being deserted, and Yama found himself without occupation. Brahma then came to Gaya and asked him to give his sacred body to him so that a sacrifice could be performed on it. Gaya assented and the ceremony took place in the *Sveta-varaha Kalpa*. Brahma created priests to perform the sacrifice; they laid Gaya out with his head pointing towards the north and his feet towards the south. Gaya's head began to shake towards the end of the sacrificial ceremony: Brahma asked Yama to place on it the special *Dharmasila*, but even with that Gaya was not steady. All the gods stood on the *Sila*, but in vain. Ultimately Vishnu gave His

own image and later appeared in person holding His mace and stood over the Dharmasila on Gaya's head which steadied itself. Gaya complained that it was not necessary to torture him in such a manner and that Vishnu's order would have been sufficient. Then he asked for and was granted the boon that all gods and even Vishnu should stand on his head permanently and the place be called Gaya after him. The holy place on which all the gods stand is known as Gayasiras (the head of Gaya). It is also called the Vishnupada (the footprint of Vishnu). Vishnu stands there as the Adi-Gadadhara holding a mace in his hand.

The following is the legend of the Dharmasila. Dharma had a pious daughter named Dharmavrata. She practised penance as she was unable to secure for herself a suitable husband. One day Brahma's son Marichi, passing that way, asked her why she was practising penance. On hearing her reason, Marichi offered to marry her. She accepted him and they were married with Dharma's blessings. Their married life was a happy one and they had many sons.

Once Marichi was tired and when he returned home, he asked his wife to shampoo his feet and fell asleep as she did so. Meanwhile his father Brahma came to the house and the daughter-in-law got up to receive him. Marichi awakened to find his wife neglecting the work he had entrusted to her. He became very angry and cursed her with the words: "Be a stone". She was angered by his short temper which she considered unjustifiable and said that Marichi too would have Mahadeva's curse. Being unable to rid herself of the curse by carrying out a severe penance, she asked the gods if she could be the most sacred stone in the universe, that whoever placed *pindas* on her—the sacred stone—would liberate his ancestors. She was promised that this would happen when she was placed

on the head of Gaya and all gods stood on that stone. The sila was placed on the back of Gaya's head; this place is, therefore, also called Munda-prishtha.

The following is the legend about the mace in the hand of Adi-Gadadhara Vishnu. Brahma asked a very strong Asura called Gada to give his strong bones to him. The latter consented to this and Vishwakarma made a strong mace out of them. Another *asura* named Heti had secured a boon that he would not be killed by known missiles such as the discus of Krishna etc. Heti's behaviour became so unbearable that he had to be destroyed so Vishnu took that *gada* or mace and killed him with it. Vishnu stood over the stone on Gaya's head with this mace in His hand and was known as Adi-Gadadhara.

Brahma completed the sacrifice on Gaya's head and paid very liberal fees to Brahmins of that place with a request that they should beg no more from others. In spite of this, they begged of Dharma, who performed another sacrifice at Dharmaranya. So they were cursed by Brahma. They repented and Brahma decreed them maintenance out of the fees of the pilgrims who come to perform *sraddhas* at Gaya. This is the legend of the Gayawal Brahmins of Gaya.

The legend of a Gayasura is taken by Dr. Rajendralal Mitra as an allegory in which Brahmanism reasserts itself over Buddhism. According to him, the pious and compassionate Gaya, who is also a heretic, represents Buddhism. O'Malley thinks it is a compromise of Brahmanism with the demon-worship of an earlier age. Dr. Barua takes Gaya as a demon of darkness like Vritra and the interpretation of Vishnu's three steps given by Aurnavabha (and referred to by Yaksha) as the basis of the Gaya legend. Dr. Kane rightly says that Gaya was a Pitri Tirtha centuries before Christ and the legend is a *post facto* attempt

to account for the sanctity of the place like many other legends of the Puranas.

Pindas offered to the Pitris or ancestors at Gaya mean that those people in hell are thereby supposed to go to heaven and those in heaven are freed from further births. One can go to Gaya and even offer *pindas* to one's own self also for the same purpose; but this should be without sesame and the *pinda* must be given into the hands of the image of god Janardana. A sannyasin need not offer *pindas*; he should only raise his *danda* or staff and place it on the Vishnupada (foot-point).

Gayakshetra is 5 *Krosas* in size and Gayasiras is one *Krosa*. Fasting and shaving are performed at other Tirthas—not at Gaya, Kurukshetra, Viraja or Visala. The name and *gotra* of the person to receive the *pindas* should be mentioned. Vishnu in his liquid form is said to be the sacred river Phalgu. Vishnu remains in Phalgu in the non-manifest or Avyakta form, Vyaktavyakta form in His foot-prints at Vishnupada and vyakta or manifest form in the various images. One can offer *Pindas* in Gaya at any time, though Bhadrapada dark half is the most auspicious time. The procedure for *sraddha* is that one should offer a seat to the *pindas*, which should be offered to ancestors: water should be sprinkled again over the *kusa* grass, fees given and the intention to feed declared. At Gaya the *pitris* need no invocation, there is no necessity for privacy for the *sraddha* and no curtains need be fixed up to ensure such privacy. The greatest rewards are achieved if one observes celibacy, dines once in a day, sleeps on the ground, speaks the truth, remains pure, and thinks good of all creatures. The famous Vaitarni river is supposed to have come down to Gaya to liberate the ancestors.

Before starting on a pilgrimage to Gaya, one should go round his own town and perform a *sraddha*. This is a

call to the *pītris* to come to Gaya with him for their liberation.

Chapter 110 of *Vayupurana* describes in detail how the Gaya Yatra should be performed. First one should dig a pit in the Phalgu river, perform *Tarpana* and then the *śraddha*. Furthermore the same process is repeated on Preta Parvata after a bath at Brahmakunda and *pindas* are offered on the Pretasila. In Ashtaka, Vriddhi-śraddha and at Gaya the mother's *śraddha* should be performed separately; but elsewhere it should be performed with her husband. One must offer water with sesame. The *mantra* is: "Let all gods, sages, ancestors and men from Brahma onwards to a blade of grass be satisfied with this water libation mixed with sesame. Let all my paternal and maternal ancestors of endless past generations and residing in any of the seven continents or anywhere from the world of Brahma onwards be hereby satisfied."

Three paternal ancestors and their wives and three maternal ancestors and their wives make twelve immediate ancestors. Some say only nine should be mentioned, others say only six.

All those in the family who have not secured a good position after death are invoked—all agnates, cognates, *bandhus*, those who died in childhood before they cut their teeth, those who died in the womb; those who died from fire, lightning, wild beasts, poison, those dead in forest, etc.; those who as a result of their bad acts have become evil spirits or are being tortured in hell, those who have been obliged to become beasts etc., those without any relations and *pindas* in any family whether one's own or of his *guru* or of his father-in-law—to all of them he offers the *pindas*. He bows to the *Pitris* and asks the gods to be the witnesses of the *śraddha*.

Vayupurana gives a detailed list of the sub-tirthas where the *sraddha* is to be performed. The complete pilgrimage would take seven days. There are about forty-five sub-tirthas in about thirty-five square miles. Usually only seven or even three sub-tirthas are visited. A Brahmin guide takes charge of one when one arrives in Gaya. It is essential to visit the river Phalgu, the Vishnupada and the Akaya Vata. Gayasiras, Uttaramanasa, Matangavapi, and other places are also to be visited.

The famous Vishnupada is situated in old Gaya. The foot print of Vishnu 16" \times 6" is found in an octagonal basin four feet in diameter and plated with silver. Offerings are cast into this basin.

Buddha-gaya is seven miles south of Gaya. Siddhartha left his house at the age of twenty-nine, became an ascetic for six years and wandered about in the vicinity of Rajagriha and Uruvilva (near Gaya). He practised penance at Uruvilva. Having bathed in the Nairanjana (Lilajan) river he sat under a Pipal tree at Bodh-Gaya. He received full enlightenment under this tree at the age of thirty-five and became Buddha, Tathagata and Sakya-muni. He moved on to Sarnath and started preaching. Eight months in every year he spent on the move and after preaching for forty-five years he had his Mahanirvana at the age of eighty, in 483 B.C.

This Bodhi tree is the oldest and the most venerated tree in the world; its story is an eventful one. Buddhist traditions say that the tree was destroyed by Tisarakṣita but revived by Asoka. Saint Upagupta led his royal disciple Asoka to the various sacred spots in the Buddhist holy land, including this Bodhi tree at Gaya.

Asoka granted liberal endowments at all these places and set up memorials. Hiuen Tsang in the 7th century tells of the destruction of the tree by King Sasanka of

Bengal and of its revival later on by King Purna-Varma of Magadha. A branch of it was transplanted in Ceylon in the times of Asoka.

Vayu Purana says that Gaya extends to about thirteen miles from Pretasila to Mahabodhi i.e. Gaya includes even the Buddhist sacred places.

In Buddha Gaya there is the famous old temple of Buddha and the Bodhi tree. The Simbasana or the Vajrasana where Buddha performed penance, is below the tree and is described as the centre of the Universe. A number of Buddhist relics have been excavated in this area. Buddhists from all over the world—including Nepal, Burma, China, Japan, Ceylon and other places come to this Buddhist sacred place.

Sri Meghavanna (352 to 379 A.D.), the Buddhist King of Ceylon, sent a message to Emperor Samudragupta asking permission to build a monastery in Gaya where Asoka had also built a monastery. Permission was granted. Hiuen Tsang in the 7th century visited and described it as a magnificent establishment and occupied by 1000 monks of the Sthavira School of Mahayana.

Buddhist relics form a part in Hindu worship. Buddha himself is taken as an Avatara of Vishnu. *Vayu-purana* says: "The great Bodhi tree should be worshipped. The royal Asvattha tree! I bow to you. You are the embodiment of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. You give enlightenment and liberate ancestors. By your sight and touch, let the faithful have eternal bliss."

Nearby is a mango tree which is worshipped. The saying famous at this time is that by the act of sprinkling water on the mango tree two results are achieved: one is water supplied to the mango tree and the second is the satisfaction of the ancestors. *Amrascha siktah Pitarascha triptaah."*

It is said that once when King Vishala offered *pindas*, three hands of his ancestors came up to receive them—one was white, the other was red, the third was black. His father with the white hand when asked said that on account of good actions he had gone to heaven, the grandfather who had killed a Brahmin had become red; and the great-grand-father who had killed sages had become black. The latter two were consigned to the Avichi hell. All three were liberated by the offering of *pindas* by King Vishala.

One sage Bharadwaja offered *pindas* here, and two hands came to receive them. His mother confessed that one was her husband and the other was her lover. By the *pindas* on the *sila*, both the Kshetrin (the husband) and the Bijin (the lover) were liberated.

Śraddha performed at Gayasiras yields inexhaustible results. Here the Adi-Gadadhara Vishnu abides in the form of Vishnupada (foot print). The faithful are said to be cured of incurable diseases like leprosy and given health, wealth and long life. In *Vayupurana*, Bramha says "I bow to Vishnu the wielder of the mace, who is pure and unaffected by time, who abides in Gaya, whose divine qualities are known but who is above the three gunas *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, who resides in the heart, is adored by people and is the giver of grace." Siva adds "We bow to Adi-Gadadhara who stays here and is in the non-manifest form of Mundaprishta, river Phalgu etc."

गदाधरं व्यपगतकालकल्मषं

गयागतं विदितगुणं गुणातिगम् ।

गुहागतं गिरिवरगौरगेहजं

गणार्चितं वरदमहं नमामि ॥

अव्यक्तरूपो यो देवो मुण्डपृष्ठाद्विरूपतः ।

फलगुतीर्थादिरूपेण नमाम्यादिगदाधरम् ॥

6. PURI, THE JAGANNATHPUR

अदो यद् दारु प्लवते सिधोः पारे अपूर्णम् ।

तदारभस्व दुर्हणो तेन गच्छ परस्तरम् ।

—Rig. 10-155-3.

“ O imperishable worshipper ! Worship Lord Purushottama in the form of his wooden image prepared from out of the log of wood floating on the ocean ; and by such worship reach the highest Brahman ”.

This is one of the interpretations of this *rik* given by Sayanacharya. Raghunandana in his *purushottama-tatwa* (p. 563) quotes this *rik* with slightly different meaning, along with a similar interpretation of Sankayana Bhashya ; he also quotes this passage as contained in the *Atharvaveda*.

Orissa or Utkala has Jajpur (city of sacrifices) as Parvati-kshetra or the city sacred to Parvati, Konarak as the Surya-kshetra, Bhuvaneswara as the Hara-kshetra and Puri as the Vishnu or Purushottama-kshetra. Jagannath or the Lord of the world stays here in the form of Krishna. This famous Sri Mandir has three wooden images, of Krishna, his elder brother Balarama, and their sister Subhadra. Another name for the Lord in the form of a wooden image is Daru Brahma.

Puri is 310 miles from Calcutta. The temple is situated on a gentle slope, known as Nila Parvata, by the sea. *Brahma-purana* calls it the best of all *tirthas* ten *yojanas* in extent. Lord Purushottama, supreme over inconstant things and the external, abides in this Kshetra. “ By visiting this place one can achieve the maximum reward with the minimum of effort ”. It is called the mystic navel of the earth.

The original image of the Lord was found at the foot of the everlasting fig tree in the form of Indranila or blue jewel; it is said that believers who gazed upon its overpowering light lost their desires of the flesh and went to the *sweta* or white worlds. Dharma persuaded the Lord to decrease its light, so the image was hidden in the sand.

The legend is that the good king Indradyumna of Malwa wanted to discover the Lord's image and set it up again on the earth. So he performed a great sacrifice. He worshipped Purushottama with Pancharatra rites. He offered prayers, spread grass on the ground and slept on it with a devout mind. Vasudeva, the world teacher, holding the discus in his hand appeared before the king in a dream. The Lord was pleased with his sacrifice, faith, and devotion, and told the king how to obtain his image. "At daybreak, go to the seashore. You will find a tall firm tree being washed by the waves of the surging sea. Take an axe and wade into the water by yourself. Cut that tree and prepare my image from its trunk." So the king obeyed the Lord and went to the shore, saw the tree and cut it. Vishnu and Visvakarma came to him as two Brahmins and offered to prepare the images provided they were left to themselves. The king agreed to this and stood apart from the two Brahmins while they prepared images of Krishna, Balarama and Subadra. The Lord again appeared before the king and assured him that they were His images. The king installed them in a temple at an auspicious hour.

The legend shows the importation of Krishna worship from north-west India, though people used to worship a blue stone and wooden images here from very ancient times. The legend is told with varied details and additions at several places. Though the *Kritya Kalpataru* of

Laksmidhar (1110-20 A.D.) in its Tirtha-kanda does not include this Tirtha, Raghunandana in his *Purusottamatawa* quotes a passage from the *Sraddhakanda Kalpataru*. The latter quotes *Vayupurana* which mentions the Purushottama Tirtha as a Pitritirtha where a *shraddha* should be performed.

It is believed that the priests fled away with the image of Jagannath in 318 A.D. during the Yavana occupation of Orissa. The pious founder and others responsible for rebuilding this temple at various times have all assumed the name of Indradyumna.

Following on the early Hindu period of worship at Puri, according to Dr. Rajendralal Mitra, there was a Buddhist period which in turn was followed by the period of Krishna—or Vishnu-worship. The peculiarities of Jagannath worship, its catholicity, its broad basis, its ignoring of caste barriers, and the similarity of the Ratha-Yatra or Car Festival with the procession of Buddha's tooth—these and similar other factors tend to support the view that Puri was the same Dantapura where the sacred relic of Buddha's tooth was also situated and preserved. It was taken out every year in a procession with great pomp and devotion and subsequently removed to Ceylon.

The five *tirthas* of Jagannath are the Pool of Markandeya, the Banyan Tree which is identified with Krishna, Rauhineya or Balarama, the ocean, and the Pool of Indradyumna.

Naradiya (Uttarardha) ch. 55 states that the *yatra* for Puri must be so timed that Lord Purusottama is seen on the 12th of the bright half of Jyestha. Firstly one should take a bath, dipping thrice into the Markandeya Pool and then proceed to Siva's temple nearby. Having worshipped Siva with his *mula-mantra* "Om bow to Siva" or

the *Vedic* Aghora *mantra*, one should go to the banyan tree which is considered as Vishnu himself. One should salute the tree and walk three times around it and then go on to Balarama and offer prayers to him. Having done this, one should worship Krishna, who is Purushottama and Jagannath or Lord of the world. The *puja* should be with the *mantra* of twelve letters "Om I bow to Bhagwan Vasudeva" and with the *purushasukta* (*Rigveda* 10-90); then one should offer *puja* to Krishna's sister Subadra and take a bath in the sea and the Pool of Indradyumna.

The shrine of Jagannath is enclosed in a square 652×630 feet, and protected by a stone wall 20 ft. high. This square contains about 120 temples. The tower of Jagannath is 192 feet high surmounted by the mystic wheel and flag of Vishnu. The temple has four chambers. The first is the Bhoga-mandir where oblations are made; the second is the Nata-mandir or the pillared hall for music and dancing; the third is the Jagamohana-mandir, being the hall of audience in which the pilgrims assemble; and the fourth is the sanctuary or the Bara Deval of the Lord, the holy cell.

The three wooden images without hands are crudely fashioned in the form of human busts revealing only from the waist upwards. A legend says that the images were not completed because they were seen while they were being made in spite of the fact that they were not meant to be on view in that unfinished state. The spiritual explanation offered is that the Lord needs no hands or feet to create, protect or destroy the universe.

King Anantavarman Chodaganda (1078 to 1148 A.D.) ruled the territory stretching from the mouth of Ganga to the mouth of Godavari including Orissa for more than 70 years. He was a great patron of religion and Sanskrit and the story goes that he built the famous

temple of Jagannath at Puri. In A.D. 1174 King Ananga Bhima Deo, Lord of the Elephants, became ruler of Orissa. According to the temple story, he slew a Brahmin and in expiation of his guilt he built the present temple; its construction took 14 years and was finished in A.D. 1198. It is said that the image was buried three times for protection in the Chilka lake; and that once in A.D. 1558 "when a Muslim general desired to put an end to the god of Orissa and threw the image on a blazing pile of wood, his limbs dropped off and he fell dead".

Jagannath is the God of the people. High and low are enjoined to eat here together. In the presence of the Lord, all are equal as all barriers of caste, race and faith are transcended. To deny the Mahaprasada of the Lord, which is always blood-less, is said to invite the wrath of the despised God.

The famous Sankaracharya, one of the greatest Hindu philosophers established four big monasteries at Sringeri in Mysore, at Dwarka in Saurashtra, at Badrinath in Himalayas and at Puri in Orissa. The Puri math is known as the Govardhana Peetha. Most of the Vaishnavite sects are anxious to seek some kind of connection with Puri for some reason or another.

Ramanuja, the great Vaishnava preacher lived in 1150 A.D. and Ramananda of the 14th century is considered as one of his disciples. The latter and his pupils preached equality of all castes before God. Kabir who is believed to be one of the 12 *shishyas* of Ramananda, carried his master's message into Bengal and Orissa. A monastery named after Kabir exists today at Puri.

Kabir fostered a spirit of harmony between Hinduism and Islam, and preached a religion of love and unity among all classes and creeds. If Vishnu takes an *Avatara* in inferior animals like a fish or boar he can reside in

persons of any caste high or low. Even today people are asked to beg a spoonful of rice-water from the Kabir monastery and a piece of bread from the place of saint Malukdas at Puri.

After Kabir came Chaitanya (1485 to 1533 A.D.). Having renounced the world at the age of twenty-four, he preached his message of intense love and devotion to the Lord for eighteen years in Orissa and for the last six years of his life in Deccan, Brindavan, and elsewhere. His followers regard him as an incarnation of Vishnu and call him Gauranga Mahaprabhu. Even Muslims were to be found among his followers. He preached that God could be seen if one entered a state of ecstasy produced by one's intensity of love towards Him. This could be achieved by the fervour of devotion, by forgetting everything else and by singing his praises and dancing in joy before the Lord. He greatly popularised and extended the worship of Jagannath. An Orissa tradition says that in A.D. 1503 the king of Orissa, Pratapa-rudra-dev, had a public dispute with Chaitanya. He acknowledged defeat and became Chaitanya's disciple.

The temple attendants are divided into 36 orders and 97 classes. The leading one is the Raja of Khurda who calls himself by the lowly title of "sweeper to Jagannath." There are 24 high festivals during the course of the year. The greatest of them all is, of course, the Car Festival or the Ratha-Yatra. Fa Hien's description (5th century A.D.) of the yearly procession of the Buddha's Sacred Tooth applies greatly to this procession.

Ratha-Yatra starts on the 2nd of the bright half of Ashadha. Preparations for this festival are made weeks in advance. Jagannath's car is 45 feet high, 35 feet square with 16 wheels 7 feet in diameter. The cars of Balarama and Subadra are a few feet smaller. The images are brought

out and the worshipping multitude acclaims them with a mighty voice as the car is taken to the Lord's country house. It was believed at one time that many committed suicide and got crushed in this procession but there is no basis for this exaggerated statement. Certain texts recommend religious suicide at many *tirthas*, including Puri. In the works of other writers it is prohibited. But there is no special self-immolation at Puri as is widely imagined.

Brahmapurana says: "Those who contemplate on this subtle, eternal, ancient deity of the lustre of pure blue sky—they do not attach any importance to learning, sacrifices, gifts, or severe penances. Those who are devoted to the world-teacher Krishna from whom springs both liberation and bliss, are blessed, pure, learned, virtuous and performers of sacrifices and penances; *they* have known perfectly, given liberally and spoken truthfully who have intense love for Lord Purushottama."

ये तं सुसूक्ष्मं विमलाम्बरामं ध्यायन्ति नित्यं पुरुषं पुराणम् ।
 किं विद्यया किं सुगुणैश्च तेषां यज्ञैश्च दानैश्च तपोभिर्यैः ॥
 येषां तु भक्तिर्भवतीह कृष्णे जगद्गुरौ भोक्षसुखप्रदे च ।
 लोके स धन्यः स शुचिः स विद्वान्मखैस्तपोभिः स गुणैर्वरिष्ठः ।
 ज्ञाता स दाता स तु सत्यवक्ता यस्यास्ति भक्तिः पुरुषोत्तमाख्ये ॥

7. MADURAI

नानायोगिमुनीन्द्रद्वित्रिवसती नानार्थसिद्धिप्रदां

नानापुष्पविराजिताङ्घ्रियुगलां नारायणेनार्चिताम् ।

नादब्रह्ममयीं परात्परतरां नानार्थतत्त्वात्मिकां मीनाक्षीं प्रणतोऽस्मि

सन्ततमहं काव्यवारांनिधिम् ।

“I CONSTANTLY bow to Goddess Meenakshi, the ocean of mercy, who abides in the hearts of numerous saints and sages, yields manifold rewards, whose feet are covered with heaps of flowers, who is worshipped by Narayana Himself, who is of the nature of Nada-Brahma, who is the highest and who is the essence of all multiplicity.”

—Sri Sankaracharya.

The railway junction of Madurai on the Southern Railway is situated on the Vaigai river. It contains one of the most sacred and famous temples of South-India, that of Goddess Meenakshi and Her consort Lord Sankara in the form of God Sundareswara. This twin temple is situated in a parallelogram 847×729 feet and contains 9 *gopurams*, the biggest being 152 feet high.

The Goddess is called the Kadamba-Vana-Vasini, residing in the forest of Kadamba trees. The greatness of this sacred place is described in the *Halasya Mahatmya* in Sanskrit and *Thiruvilayadal Purana* in Tamil. Madura was the capital of the ancient and mighty Pandya kingdom in the South. Kalidasa in *Raghuvamsa*, Canto 6, (verses 60-65) describes the Pandya ruler as the Lord of the South, performer of numerous Asvamedha sacrifices, and one whose Sausnatika was the illustrious sage Agastya (i.e. when the ruler took the Avabhritha bath after the completion of the sacrifice, the sage wished him

well). He was the worshipper of Lord Siva, had acquired a divine weapon through His grace, and the King of Ceylon, Ravana, had sought an alliance with him.

It is said that one Dhananjaya, a merchant of a neighbouring town was once returning through this forest area when he saw Indra worshipping a Swayambhu Sivalinga. The Pandya king Kulasekhara of Manavur was informed of this. Siva as Sundareswara appeared in the King's dream. Drops of nectar fell on the place from Siva's matted hair. On account of the sweetness of nectar, the place became known as Madhura (or Madurai). A serpent was seen on the spot and by its movements it marked the boundaries of the town. The place where the tail and the mouth of the coiled serpent coincided (Halasya) was selected as the sanctuary of the sacred temple which is said to have been constructed by the Pandya ruler.

Indra is said to have once displeased His teacher Brihaspati who left him. Vritra in the meantime defeated Indra who then accepted the help of King Nahusa. The latter after defeating Vritra occupied Indra's throne and even claimed his wife Indrani. She cleverly asked him to come in a palanquin which was carried by the seven sages. The impatient Nahusa insulted the slow-moving rishis by ordering them "Sarpa-Sarpa" (move on, move on) which also meant a serpent. The angry sages thereupon cursed Nahusa to be a serpent. Indra in the meantime came to this Kadamba Vana and worshipped the Sivalinga. Siva, who was pleased at this, gave back to Indra his throne and gave him the privilege of worshipping Siva there on the Chaitra Poornima. This day is celebrated with great fervour and devotion at Madurai.

Goddess Meenakshi is supposed to have incarnated Herself as a daughter of the Pandya king, Malayadhwaja. Siva assumed the form of Sundara and married her.

On one occasion a heretic king of the neighbouring area came to attack Madurai with an elephant. On the Pandya ruler undertaking to construct a sixteen-pillared hall for the Lord, the elephant was destroyed and was turned into a rock, now called Anamalai.

Usually Lord Nataraja (Siva) dances with His left leg. In Madurai at the special request of King Rajasekara Pandya, the Lord danced with His right leg. The place where the Lord so danced is called Velliambalam.

It is said that Saraswati was once cursed by Her husband Brahma for quarrelling with Him and She had to assume the human form. She divided her lustre among 48 poets who became very learned and illustrious. God Sundareswara became their head. A college for these famous Tamil poets was established and the Sangam, or the College Hall, came into existence.

The legend proves that Madura had already become a seat of Tamil learning in very ancient times and periodic conferences of literary men and poets, called Sangams, were frequently held there.

The Ayirakkal or the thousand-pillared Mandapam of this temple is supposed to have been built by Arianayakam Mudali, Minister of Vishvanath Nayaka, in 1560 A.D. It contains excellent sculptures on its stone pillars. In the corridors, the 64 Leelas of the Lord are painted on the walls.

The Pudumandapam or New Gallery is a beautiful Mandapam 333 x 105 feet with attractive sculptures, and is the spring resort (Vasanta Mandapam) of the Lord. Its date of construction is known to be about 1623-45 A.D. It contains the statues of the Nayak kings of Madurai.

The palace of Tirumala Nayak is situated about $\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the temple. It was constructed during the reign of Tirumala Nayak between 1623-45 A.D. This

palace is now utilised for public offices. It contains beautiful domes and arches. It is said that this Nayak ruler suffered from catarrh and in a dream the Goddess appeared to him and told him to change the capital from Trichinopoly to Madurai and to expand the Meenakshi Temple. He was cured of his disease. All the most beautiful portions of the temple are attributed to this Tirumala Nayak. He settled down at Madurai and built the palace named after him. In point of ornamentation, beauty and workmanship the Swarga Vilasa or the celestial pavilion of this palace is supreme. It has a dome of 60 feet in diameter and 70 feet high.

South India was divided into many States, the important ones being those of the Chola, Pandya and Kerala. The Pandyas excelled in trade and learning. They ruled the districts of Madurai and Tirunelveli. One Pandya king even sent an ambassador to the Roman Emperor Augustus in the first century B.C. The territory was known as M'abar by the Muslim writers. Jalal-ud-din Ahsan Shah, the Governor of M'abar proclaimed himself an independent ruler in 1335 A.D. This independent Muslim kingdom existed till 1378 A.D. when it became part of the rising State of Vijayanagar which was founded in 1336 A.D. The subordinate Viceroys of the Vijayanagar Empire like the chiefs of Seringapattam and Bednur and the Nayaks of Madurai and Tanjore acquired in due course independent kingdoms.

Goddess Meenakshi is so called because Her eyes are like those of fish. It is said that the mother fish feeds her young ones by mere sight. Goddess Meenakshi in such a way blesses her devotees by her *Kataksha* or look. In the sanctuary the beautiful image of the goddess in black stone faces the east. The jewellery and the other heavy equipment for Her worship are highly elaborate and costly.

Thousands among the faithful claim to have felt the presence of the deity श्रीमत्सुन्दरनायकी the consort of Sundareswara. This famous and sacred temple of Meenakshi at Kadamba Vana or Halasya or Madurai is mentioned in *Devi Bhagavata* as one of the principal Sakti Peethas.

8. DWARAKA

अहो सनाथा भवता स्म यद् व्य
त्रैविष्टपानामपि दूरदर्शनम् ।
प्रेमस्मितस्निग्धनिरीक्षणाननं
पश्येम रूपं तव सर्वसौभगम् ॥

—भागवत १-११-४

THE people of Dwaraka hailed Krishna with these words:—

“In You we have our best leader and guide. We are fortunate that we are in a position to come close to you who are all kindliness, whose face is beaming with radiant affection and smiles, particularly when looking to your divine height, your very sight is difficult to be had even by gods.”

Dwaraka is described in *Mahabharata*, *Harivamsa*, *Vayu*, *Vishnu*, *Bhagavata*, *Varaha*, *Skanda* and other puranas. *Skanda* has forty-four chapters devoted to it.

Legend says that Manu's son Yayati had a son called Anarta; the latter's son was Revata. Revata ruled over Anarta with its capital at Kusasthali which is identified with Dwaraka or Dwaramati. Revata's son Raivta wanted to get his daughter Revati married to a suitable bridegroom. Having failed to find anyone himself, he went for a consultation with Brahma. The latter told him that by the time of their conversation several ages had passed, many were born and even dead, so Revati should be married in the light of the existing circumstances to Balarama, the elder brother of Krishna, at Dwaraka.

Krishna killed Kamsa at Mathura. Thereafter Jarasandha of Magadha and Kalayavana simultaneously attacked Mathura, Finding that Yadavas were practically

besieged on all sides, Krishna decided to come down and construct a strong fort near the sea in Saurashtra and so settled in Dwaraka. This place was not far from the Raivataka Mount.

The description in the puranas suggests that Dwaraka in Krishna's time was near the sea and the Raivataka Mount.

On account of the curse of sages, the Yadavas got drunk, fought among themselves at Prabhasa and practically all of them got killed. Krishna gave up his body under a pipal tree near Prabhasa. After his death, the whole city of Dwaraka was inundated by the sea. One legend says everything there was sunk except Krishna's palace, or as another legend says, except Rukmini's palace.

There is a great argument among orientalists regarding the exact location of the original Dwaraka of Krishna's time. The puranas say that the magnificent and prosperous city of Krishna was sunk.

The place which is at present a port in the western part of Saurashtra in the region of Okhamandal and on the bank of the Gomati stream is popularly identified with the original Dwaraka and is considered as one of the seven holy cities, a visit to which is said to give liberation. The seven cities are Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya (Haridwara), Kasi, Kanchi (Conjeevaram), Avantika (Ujjain) and Dwaramati (Dwaraka).

Dey, Altekar, Pargiter and Pusalkar consider this modern town of Dwaraka as the original site of Dwaraka. Some identified it with an island near Somanath. Durgashankar Shastri and Bhattasali identified it with modern Junagadh (Jirnadurga) which was called Girinagar. They think that the original Dwaraka was near the Raivataka or Grnar Mount and the fact that it was near the sea is a loose, incorrect and later description in some of the

puranas. There is yet another place called Mula Dwaraka, three miles south of Kodinar. Legends are also available stating that it was between Porbunder and Miyani near Madhavpur or Srinagar. There is also a stray suggestion that it may be in Sind or Punjab. In the south there is a place called Mannargudi which is also known as Dwaraka. In Marwad there is a place called Khed Dwaraka.

The general public for several centuries has voted in favour of the modern town. Even Durgashankar Shastri says that the main temple of modern Dwaraka dates back to the Gupta period, though it might have been repaired and extended in the Solanki age.

Durgashankar Shastri says that Dwaraka was not considered a Tirtha, right up to the time of Mahmood of Ghazni and that its importance as Vishnu Tirtha began only after S.Y. 1200. But Lakshmidhar (1100 to 1130 A.D.) in his *Tirtha Kalpataru* has treated of Dwaraka as one of the Vishnu-Tirthas and quoted profusely from *Varaha Purana*. If the place was not famous as such a Tirtha a few centuries before Lakshmidhar, he would not have given it a place in his digest on selected Tirthas. In one of the concluding verses Lakshmidhar quotes : —

तस्मिन् क्षेत्रे महाभागे स्थितोऽहं उत्तरामुखः ।

सर्वभागवत्प्रीत्यै समुद्रतटमाश्रितः ॥

Varaha says. "In this holy place I (Vishnu in the form of Dwarakadhisa) stand on the seashore facing the north for delight of all Bhagavatas."

This shows that even as a Vishnu-Tirtha, Dwaraka was famous long before the twelfth century.

The original Dwaraka of Krishna's time is described as being twelve *yojanas* in circumference in the middle of the sea (perhaps an island) with numerous parks, high palaces, golden domes, big *gopuras*, spacious terraces, etc.

The main attraction of the modern town of Dwaraka is the famous temple of Dwarakadhisha or Ranchhodrai, also called the Trilokasundara or the Jagat temple. Legend says that it was constructed by Vajranabha, the grandson of Krishna, with the help of Visvakarma. It is on the bank of Gomati. The Sikar has seven storeys and is 140 feet high. The large Mandapa has five storeys, with a dome supported by sixty pillars. On the outside, the temple has extensive and delicate decoration in stone. It is surrounded by two walls and the space for circumambulation is in between these two walls. In the sanctuary the image of Lord Dwarakadhisa or Ranchhodrai is standing on a silver-plated Simhasana. The image is of black stone three feet high with four arms. Pilgrims go inside, touch the feet of the Lord and place flowers *tulsi* on His feet. In the upper storey, there is an image of Ambaji (Goddess) and in one corner of the Sabhamandapa there is an image of Bala-devaji.

On one side of this main temple there is a separate temple of Trivikramaji and on the other of Pradyumnaji. There is also the temple of Kuseswara Mahadeva.

On the south of the temple, there is the Bhandar of Sri Ranchhodrai under the control of the Sarada Math of Sri Sankaracharya.

Sri Adya Sankaracharya is said to have established four maths at Shringeri, Puri, Badrinath, and Dwaraka.

It is said that Sri Adya Sankaracharya, at the age of seventeen, invoked at this place Sarada or Saraswati incarnate with the *Mantra* known as Chintamani on the first of the dark half of Kartik. On the fifth of the dark half of Kartik, he established the deity (Sarada) and after an Anushthana lasting upto the tenth bright half of Magha, he established the Sarada Peetha at Dwaraka. The story goes that one month before he died he

established on this Peetha his disciple Sureswarcharya who in his Purvasrama, i.e., before he became a Sannyasin was the famous Mandana Misra. The Peetha-records state that till now there have been seventy-six Acharyas of the Saradapeetha, many of whom were very learned and pious and have contributed largely towards the development of religious life in Western India. The present Sankaracharya is Sri Abhinavasachchidananda Tirtha Swami who became Acharya of the Peetha in Samvat year 2001.

One of the Sankaracharyas at Dwaraka opened a branch of the Peetha at Dakor where there is also a temple of Ranchhodraji. The story is that Bodhano, an intense devotee of Dwarakadhisa, grew old and could not travel to Dwaraka for pilgrimage, and following the instructions of the Lord in his dream he stole the Lord's image from Dwaraka to be brought to Dakor. The Gugali Brahmins in charge of the temple ran after him. Poor Bodhano offered in exchange the weight of the image in gold. The greedy Gugalis agreed to this bargain. The Lord became equal in weight to the small nose-ornament of Bodhana's wife. The Gugalis were then asked by the Lord to go away and to establish at Dwaraka another image to be had from the Savitri Vav. This popular legend says that this event happened in 1156 A.D. though it is lacking historical support.

The famous Narasinha Mehta, the saint and the illustrious Gujarati poet, was a great devotee of Krishna. Once a pilgrim wanted a Junagadh merchant to accept his money and give him a Hundi on a Dwaraka merchant. Some people sent him to Narsinha in jest. Narsinha seriously wrote out a Hundi on Samalshah i.e., God Dwarakadhisa Himself. The pilgrim went to Dwaraka, but found no Samalshah. It is said that ultimately the Lord Himself became merchant Samalshah and accepted

Narasinha's Hundi, paid the pilgrim the required amount and then disappeared.

Sri Ramanujacharya had come to Dwaraka on pilgrimage in about 1036-50 A.D. The various names of the Vyuhās of his Sampradaya and the images of Pradyumna, Aniruddha and other details of worship show the great influence of Sri Ramanuja at Dwaraka. Sri Madhvacharya had also been to Dwaraka in about 1236-40 A.D. The great saint of Maharashtra, Jnaneshwar, had been here in 1275 A.D. and Govindswami of Bengal in 1491 A.D. Sri Vallabhacharya visited Dwaraka three times. Shri Chaitanya and Mirabai also visited here. Vitthalesha Goswami, son of Vallabhacharya while on his *yatra* here, arbitrated between the conflicting claims of Gugali and Aboti Brahmins.

It is said that a pilgrim had to suffer three things at Dwaraka: (1) Danda, taxes for everything, e.g., for a bath Darsana, etc., (2) Munda—tonsure at this Tirtha, (3) Dam i.e., impressions of discus and conch on the hands etc., with red-hot iron casts.

The taxes were abolished by the then Gaikwar Government in 1943 A.D. The tonsure and impressions are had only by a few ultra-orthodox pilgrims.

Dwaraka is an excellent place as a summer resort. Its maximum temperature is 86 deg. and minimum is 78 deg. The sea breezes are delightfully cool.

About twenty miles from Dwaraka in the Bay of Cutch, there is an island called Bet Dwaraka. This is a place of the Vallabha Sampradaya. The Bet contains two main temples—one that of Ranchhodji and the other called Sankhoddhara. Sites and buildings are named and identified here as Krishna's palace and places connected with Rukmini and other wives of Krishna.

Regarding Sankhoddhara, the legend is that in the

Satyayuga, the demon Sankha was troubling sages of this place. The Lord in His incarnation of Matsya (fish) destroyed him. The sages then built the temple of Sankha Narayana.

On the way to Bet Dwarakā there is the Gopitalao. The white earth of this lake is called Gopichandana and pilgrims carry it with them for making marks of it on forehead, hands and chest.

Near Dwaraka there is another ancient site known as Pindaraka. It is said that Pindas offered to manes and thrown in a lake here swim on the water. It is known as Pindaraka (or Pinda Taraka) because of this phenomena. *Bhagawata* says that Samba, the son of Krishna, dressed himself as a pregnant woman to make fun of the sages and was cursed by them at this Pindaraka.

Skanda says you may not go to Kasi, Kurukshetra, Prabhasa, or Pushkara; but should unfailingly go to Dwaraka and see the face of Lord Krishna (in His home-town).

There are five *ga-karas* at Dwaraka (i) Gomati, *i.e.* bath in Gomati (2) Gomaya, *i.e.* bath with a little Gomaya—cowdung, *etc.* (3) Godana—*i.e.* gift of a cow (4) Gopichandana *i.e.*, mark on the forehead *etc.* with the white earth called gopichandana (5) Darsana of Gopinath *i.e.* Lord Krishna.

It is said that one performing numerous sacrifices with heavy Dakshinas and another having only the Darsana of Lord Krishna at Dwaraka—are equal in merit.

तस्यां वसति विश्वात्मा भुक्तिमुक्तिप्रदो हरिः ।

कलाषोडशसंयुक्तो मूर्तिद्वादशसंयुतः ।

तदेव परमं धाम तदेव परमं पदम् ।

द्वारका सा च वै धन्या यत्रास्ते मधुसूदनः

यत्र कृष्णश्चपुर्बाहुः शङ्खचक्रगदाधरः ।

नरा भुक्ति प्रयास्यन्ति तत्र गत्वा कलौ युगे ।

"In Dwaraka dwells the world-embodied Hari, the giver of happiness and liberation, in all His sixteen Kalas and twelve Murtis. That is the best place of pilgrimage, the highest spot, it is blessed Dwaraka where abides Madhusudana. Here Krishna is seen with four arms bearing the Conch, Discus and Mace in His hands. In this Kali age, the faithful obtain salvation by a visit to this place."

Skanda Purana

9. UJJAIN

अप्यन्यस्मिन् जलधर महाकालमासाद्य काले
स्थातुद्वयं ते नयनविषयं यावदत्येति भानुः ।
कुर्वन् सन्ध्याबलिपटहतां शूलिनः श्लाघनीयां
आमन्द्राणां फलमविकलं लप्स्यसे गर्जितानाम् ।

“O Cloud! even if you arrive in Ujjain at the temple of Lord Mahakala at any time other than the evening, you should make it a point to wait there till the sun sets and goes out of sight. By your thunders you will be performing the meritorious service of beating the drums at the time of the evening adoration and meal to Lord Sankara; and in that way you will have the full reward of your low roaring and deep thundering.”

—Kalidasa in *Meghaduta*, 38.

UJJAIN is Ujjayini “the Victorious”. *Skanda Purana* says it is so called because it commemorates the Victory of Lord Sankara over the Tripura Asura. A large part of the Avantya Khanda of the *Skanda* is devoted to a description of Ujjain and places thereabouts. In Asoka’s inscriptions it is known as Ujeni. Periplus and Ptolemy call it Ozene.

Modern Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh was the capital of Malwa. The country was also called Avanti. *Skanda* says that this city was known in different Kalpas by different names. It was variously called Kanaka-Sringa, Kusasthali, Avanti, Ujjayini, Padmavati, Kumudvati, Amaravati and Visala. It is situated on the right bank of the Sipra river.

In Buddha’s time it was an important stopping place on the route from Rajagriha, the Magadhan capital to

Pratishthana or Paithan in the South. Panini refers to Avanti in his *Sutra* 4-1-176. Patanjali in his *Mahabhashya* (on Vartika 10 on Panini 3-1-26) says that if one were to start walking early morning from Ujjayini, he would see sunrise in the town of Mahishmati. It is called Avanti because "it saves (avanti) people from sin".

Mahabharata says that Vinda and Anuvinda were two great princes of Avanti and they fought bravely on the side of the Kauravas and each commanded one big Akshauhini Sena.

Kalidasa (in *Meghaduta* 35) records that even in his days visitors to Ujjain were treated by the guides to legendary tales about the place, e.g., it was at this spot that Udayana the King of the Vatsas carried away the fair and lovely daughter Vasavadatta of King Pradyota of Avanti etc.

Apart from a few republics, there were four big monarchies in the time of Buddha—those of Avanti, Vatsa, Kosala, and Magadha.

It is said that Pradyota was born on the same day as that on which Buddha was born and became ruler of Avanti on the same day on which Buddha had enlightenment. Pradyota has been described as *chanda* or violent in temperament (in contrast to Buddha who was supremely peaceful) and also called *nayavarjita* or a ruler without any fixed policy. Pradyota, his two sons Gopalaka and Palaka, his daughter Vasavadatta, and King Udayana of the Vatsa country are prominently portrayed in Bhasa's dramas, particularly in the *Swapna Vasavadatta*, *Pratijna*—*Yaugandharayana*, and *Priyadarsika*.

Emperor Asoka married Devi, the daughter of a banker at Ujjain. She gave birth to a son Mahendra and a daughter Sanghamitra, both of whom have become famous in history. The Maurya princes were appointed Viceroys

with their headquarters here. Even the Viceroys of the Guptas had their seat at Ujjain.

The famous King Vikramaditya had his glorious Capital at Ujjain. Indian tradition considers him as a central figure in Indian History and it is taken that the Era beginning from 23rd February 57 B.C. commenced from the first year of the reign of this king Vikramaditya. He is considered a great military and political hero, an ideal administrator, a renowned patron of art, learning, and culture, a versatile personality, highly valiant (having *vikrama*), remover of the distress of others and an ideal ruler. Many rulers in Indian history in their attempts to imitate him have proudly adopted the title of Vikramaditya.

He is credited with supernatural qualities which are described in legendary tales found in *Vetala Panchavimsati* and *Dwatrishat Puttalika*. His wonderful achievements are also recorded in works derived from *Brihat Katha*. Nine gems are mentioned as having flourished in his reign. They are Dhanvantari, Kshapanaka, Amarasimha, Sanku, Vetala Bhatta, Ghatakharpara, Kalidasa, Varahamihira and Vararuchi. It is a historical fact that these nine persons did not flourish at one time. The legend is only an attempt to prove that the king was a patron of learning and literary celebrities.

A great controversy is raging among scholars regarding the historicity of King Vikramaditya. The earliest available use of the word Vikrama in connection with this era is of the year 898 V.S. Some say the beginning of the year with Kartik only refers to the *sarad* season and new crops as the appropriate time to begin the new year. Others identify Vikramaditya with the one or the other of the Gupta emperors. Merutunga's *Theravali* and the *Kalakacharya Katha* of the Jains clearly state that the era

was founded by King Vikramaditya to commemorate his victory over the Sakas in 57 B.C. The Jain tradition says that Vikrama's father Gardabhilla ravished the beautiful sister of Kalakacharya who was enraged; and with his astrological knowledge he won over the Saka chief and persuaded him along with his 95 friends to invade the country of Gardabhilla. Ujjayini was thus conquered by the Sakas. Kalakacharya got his sister released and then went to the court of Satavahana in Pratishthana. Seventeen years after this, the Sakari King Vikramaditya defeated the Sakas. King Vikrama ruled for 60 years, 135 years after the Vikrama era, the Sakas again defeated a descendant of King Vikrama which marked the beginning of the Saka era. There is nothing inherently incongruous in this traditional record, having a definite historical background to suggest that it is only a myth.

At the time of the visit of Hiuen-Tsang in the 7th century, there was a Brahmin king at Ujjain. Later on Paramaras became masters of Malwa from 9th century onwards. Munja and his famous nephew Bhoja ruled Malwa from Dhara which was then the capital. Bhoja ruled for 40 years and was a great patron of literature. Both uncle and nephew were authors of repute themselves.

Ujjain is one of the seven sacred cities a visit to which brings liberation. They are Ayodhya, Mathura, Haridwara, Kasi, Kanchi, Ujjain, and Dwaraka. The site of the old city of Ujjain is one mile away from the modern town.

The famous Kumbha Mela takes place in Ujjain every 12 years when Jupiter is in Scorpio. It is held at Prayaga Haridwar and Nasik when Jupiter is respectively placed in Taurus, Acquarius, and Leo. It is said that Brihaspati ran away with the Kumbha or pot of nectar which came out of churning up the ocean. [A few drops of nectar fell

from the Kumbha at these four places which are considered holy.

In Ujjain the most famous spot is the temple of Lord Mahakala. It is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Sankara. The temple stands near a lake and has five storeys, one of which is underground. The way leading to the sanctuary is dark and lamps are kept constantly burning.

The general belief is that whatever is offered to Siva becomes Nirmalya and cannot be accepted again for use ; but this rule does not apply to the Jyotirlingas. Here not only the Prasada offered to the deity can be accepted but even the leaves of the Bilva tree once offered to God can be washed and reoffered. (See *Sivapurana* I ch. 42).

The city is situated on the Sipra river. Pilgrims take a bath on the Raughat and then worship the deity.

The legend about Mahakala as narrated in *Sivapurana* 1-46, is this. There was a pious and devout Brahmin residing in Avanti. He had four sons. A demon by name Dushana, residing in the Ratnamala hill, besieged the town of Avanti, and started harassing the inhabitants. The people approached the pious Brahmin who then practised yoga. As a result of this the earth opened up and Lord Mahakala appeared and destroyed Dushana. The God was requested to abide there for the worship of the devotees, and so he stayed there in the form of the Mahakala Jyotirlinga.

Skanda describes this area as the Mahakala Vana. *Agnipurana* calls it the best of Tirthas. *Darsana* of Mahakala is said to liberate the faithful and save a person from untimely death (*Akala-mrityu*).

Another famous temple at Ujjain is that of Goddess Harasiddhi. The legend (*Skanda* 5-1-19) goes that Lord Sankara was once having a domestic game of dice with his

wife Gauri at Kailasa. Two devils chanda and Prachanda disturbed them and even wounded the Nandin. Hara contemplated on the Goddess and requested her to destroy them. The Goddess appeared and accomplished the work of Hara and is therefore called Harasiddhi. She is considered as one of the nine principal forms of Goddess Durga. It is said that Harasiddhi was the family Goddess of King Vikramaditya. Animal sacrifice, particularly of a buffalo on the Navami day, is considered meritorious.

Pilgrims also visit a Vata tree known as Siddhavata. It is small in size and is supposed to have retained the same size since years.

After killing his maternal uncle Kamsa at Mathura, Krishna, his brother Balarama and their friend Sudama were sent to sage Sandipani at Ujjain for purposes of study. After completion of study, Krishna is said to have paid his teacher's fee by receiving or bringing back his Guru's son Datta who had been drowned by the Ocean and taken over by Yama. Visitors are also shown a cave as that of Bhatrihari.

Of the nine gems of King Vikramaditya mentioned by tradition, the famous Varahamihira at least lived a greater part of his life at Ujjain. He was the reputed astrologer and astronomer and author of works on *yatra*, *vivaha*, *ganita*, *hora*, and *samhita*. His *Brihadjataka* and *Brihat-samhita* are celebrated works. In his *Panchasiddhantika* he has also collected the views of his predecessors. For his mathematical calculations he has accepted the Saka year 427 and one commentator says he died at the age of 95. He must therefore, have flourished in the 6th century A.D. He was the son of Adityadasa and he says that he had obtained the grace of the Sungod in a village called Kapitthaka near Avanti.

Ujjain is also known for the observatory built there

by King Jayasimha. He was a king of Jaipur and came to Gadi in 1693 A.D. He was a learned scholar of astronomy. He realised that the planetary positions calculated according to the books of either the Indian, the Muslim or European scholars did not tally with the actual positions in the sky and to bring greater exactitude, he built observatories specially constructed of stone and chunam at five places in India at Jaipur, Indraprastha, Ujjain, Kasi and Mathura. He composed or had composed two works, one in Arabic called "Ziz Mahomed" or "Mijasti" and another in Sanskrit called *Siddhanta Samrat*. The Arabic work was given the name it bears because Mahomed Shah was then ruling in Delhi. Experts have held the view that the calculations of Jayasimba were more exact and minute than those which were made at that time by the European astronomers.

Ujjain is the Greenwich or the first meridian or 0 deg. East longitude of the Hindu astronomers and geographers. Its latitude is 23 deg. 11" 10" north of equator.

Kalidasa has described Ujjain at great length in *Meghaduta* and in *Raghuvamsa* VI-34 he says "The ruler of Avanti could afford to have sports with his wives in the nights of the dark half of the month as they were brightly lit up on account of their vicinity with the temple of the moon-crested Mahakala Sankara". Bana in his *Kadambari* gives a fairly long description of Ujjain and then concludes :

किं बहुना । यस्यां सुरासुरचूडामणिमरीचिचुम्बितचरणनखमयूरवो
निशितशूलदारितान्वकमहासुरो गौरीनूपुरकोटिघृष्टशेखरचन्द्रशकलस्त्रि-
पुरभस्मरजः-कृताङ्गरागो मकरध्वजध्वंसविधुरया रत्या प्रसादयन्त्या
प्रसारितकरयुगलविगलितवलयनिकराचिंतचरणः प्रलयानलशिखाकलाप-
कपिलजटामारभ्रान्तसुरसिन्धुरन्धकाराति भगवानुत्सृष्टकैलासवास-
प्रीतिर्महाकालाभिधानः स्वयं निवसति ।

“What more can be said? In this city abides the God Himself bearing the name of Mahakala abandoning his love of residence at Mount Kailasa—that God the lustre of the nails of whose feet is kissed by the rays of the crest-jewels of (the bowling) Gods and demons; who tore asunder the great demon Andhaka with His sharp trident; who while bowing to please His wife Gauri had the edges of the moon in His crest smoothened off on its being rubbed with the foot anklet of Gauri; who had besmeared His body with the ashes of Tripurasura; on whose feet fell the bangles of Rati when she was trying to please Him with outstretched hands on her becoming a widow with the destruction of her husband Madana; in whose long matted hair as tawny as the flames of the fire of destruction the heavenly Ganges got confused; the God who is the enemy of the demon called Andhaka.”

10. KANCHI

ततस्तु गौरी मुदिता हरेः पुर-
स्तत्रैवै चैकाम्रतरोरधस्तात् ।
चकार पूजां विधिवद् वृषाकपे-
स्तदीयसन्दर्शनसौख्यलालसा ॥

“Then Parvati was delighted and worshipped Sankara in accordance the prescribed rites in the presence of Vishnu at Kanchi under the *single-mango tree* with a desire that she might have the pleasure of once again seeing Sankara (who had been temporarily angry with her).”

—*Brahmanda Purana.*

KANCHI or Conjeevaram, situated in the Chingleput District, about 45 miles south-west of Madras, is one of the most ancient towns of South India. It was the famous capital of the Pallava kings. Seven cities are described as sacred—Ayodhya, Mathura, Haridwar, Kasi, Kanchi, Ujjain and Dwaraka. Out of these, three are said to be sacred to Siva and three to Vishnu, but Kanchi, the seventh, is sacred to both. The city is divided into two parts, one, the Siva-kanchi or the big Kanchi, and the other, the Vishnukanchi or the little Kanchi.

The city was called by various names like Kachchipedu, Kachchi, Kanchi and Kanchipuram. This ancient capital of the Pallava rulers was also a famous seat of learning and had a number of temples and shrines of Saivite, Vaishnavite, Jain and Buddhist creeds. The number of epigraphs and inscriptions collected here have thrown a great light on the early history of the South.

Brahmanda says that Kasi and Kanchi are like the two eyes of Siva, and that Kanchi, though it is a well-known

Vishnu *tirtha*, is capable of giving one an abode in the presence of Siva.

Hiuen Tsang records that Buddha visited this place which was about 6 miles in circumference and preached the Buddhist Dharma, that Asoka had built several *stupas* here and that Kanchi was the birth-place of Dharmapala Bodhisatva. The Chinese pilgrim further records that in the seventh century when he visited the Tondai-Mandalam of the Pallavas, there were in Kanchi some hundreds of Sangharamas and 10,000 Theravadin priests. The famous Buddhist logician Dinnaga lived in Kanchi. By the religious revival of Saivism and Vaishnavism in South India the Buddhist and the Jain influences gradually disappeared.

Sundaramurti Nayanar, the Tamil saint, has mentioned sixty-three Saiva devotees; six of them belonged to the Tondai-mandalam of which Kanchi was the capital. Sekkilar, the famous author of *Periyapuranam* also belonged to Tondai-Mandalam.

Kanchi is also associated with the earliest of Vaishnavite saints and Alvars like Poygai-Alvar, Pudat-Alvar, Pey-Alvar and saints like Tirumalisai and Tirumangai of melodious songs.

The Saivite Nayanmars and the Vaishnava Alvars who flourished in the South from about the sixth century onwards, were inspired devotees of Siva and Vishnu; their melodious singing and sweet devotional poetry exercised a tremendous influence in regenerating the orthodox Hindu faith, and creating a voluminous devotional literature in Tamil; they gradually eliminated the Buddhist and Jain influences. The then available Saiva hymns of Sambandar, Appar, Sundarar, Manikkavachakar, Tirumular, Nakkirar, and others were arranged by Nambi-Andar-Nambi in eleven books called *Tirumurais*. Similarly Nathamuni col-

lected the then available Vaishnava hymns of twelve Alvars like Tirumangai, Tirumalisai, Andal and several other saints into a voluminous work called *Nalayira Prabandham*.

King Mahendra-Varman I (600-630 A.D.) was one of the greatest of the Pallava Kings and one of his titles was Chettakari or builder of temples. It is said that he first had accepted Jainism but under the influence of the Saivite saint Appar he embraced Saivism. He became such a zealous supporter of his new faith that he destroyed a Jain monastery. He built numerous temples to Siva and Vishnu, including rock-cut temples. This Mahendra-Varman I, was the author of *Mattavilasa Prahasana* in Sanskrit. His father Simhavishnu was the patron of the famous Sanskrit poet Bharavi, the author of *Kiratarjuniyam*. Mahendra-Varman's son Narasimha Varman (630-668 A.D.) erected monolithic shrines at Mahabalipuram, the famous seven pagodas near Madras. It was during his regime that the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited Kanchi.

Narasimha Varman II (695-722 A.D.) built the Kailasnath temple at Kanchi and the shore-temple at Mahabalipuram. Dandin, the well-known Sanskrit author, is said to have flourished in his regime. Nandivarman II (730-800 A.D.) who was a Vaishnava, built the Mukteswar temple and the Vaikunthaperumal temple at Kanchi. Tirumangai Alwar flourished during his reign.

Tirukkachchi-Ekamban or the famous Ekamranath temple is mentioned in the hymns of Jnanasambandha who flourished in the seventh century. In South India there are five lingas of Sankara representing the five elements. The Ekamranath *linga* at Kanchi represents the Prithvi or earth *linga*; at Jambukesvaram there is the *Ap* or water *linga*; at Tiruvannamalai there is the *Agni* or fire

linga; at Kalahasi there is the Vayu or wind *linga*; and at Chidambaram there is the *Akasa* or ether *linga*.

The legend, as stated in '*Brahmanda*', says that Siva and Gauri once quarrelled while playing a game of dice; Gauri insulted Siva who cursed her with ugliness till she, with Vishnu's grace could satisfy Siva by performing a penance under a single mango tree at Kanchi. First she secured Vishnu's grace which removed her ugliness and made her Kamakshi or one with lovely eyes. To test her devotion, Siva released the flow of Ganga at the place where Gauri was worshipping Him. Gauri was frightened by this sudden onrush of water and clung to Siva's image. Siva was pleased, Gauri had her happy reunion, and on a special prayer Siva agreed to stay under that Single-Mango Tree in the form of Ekamranatha or Ekambaranatha or Ekamban.

This shrine, as is evident from the name, has a mango tree. Siva is said to have appeared before Gauri under this tree. It has been suggested that the name Ekamban is connected with Kambai i.e. the Vegavati river which flows to the west of Kanchi.

By the side of this temple there is the shrine of Goddess Kamakshi. Gauri who had once become ugly on Siva's displeasure again took the form of Kamakshi here. The goddess is worshipped in the form of a Yantra. The *chakra* is placed in front and not below the image as is done at other places.

Sri Adya Sankaracharya who lived in the eight century was a devout worshipper of this Kamakoti-Ambika. The legend goes that Goddess Kamakshi was assuming the form of Kali, moving out at nights in the country which had become the object of divine wrath, and causing untold disturbances. Sankaracharya appeased her and extracted a promise from her not to stir out of the temple without

his permission. The divine mother, immensely pleased with his prayers, agreed to it.

There is an image of Sankaracharya in the Kamakshi temple. Whenever the procession of the goddess is taken out of the temple into the town, the tradition continues even today to halt before the image of Sankaracharya to take the necessary permission. Some people say that Sri Sankaracharya died at Kanchi; others say that he died in the Himalayas near Kedar. A Peetha of the Sankara Sampradaya was established at Kanchi known as Kamakoti-peetha. It was originally situated at Vishnukanchi and subsequently shifted to Siva-Kanchi when followers of Shri Ramanuja began to increase in Vishnu-Kanchi. This Kamakotipeeta was shifted from Kanchi to Kumbhakonam in 1743 A.D.

The present Guru at Kanchi Sankara Matha, His Holiness the Sankaracharya of the Kamakoti Peetham, is the 68th in succession. Kama Koti Peetham is considered as the central Math of Adi Sankaracharya according to Siva Rahasya of the Skanda Purana. The present Guru is a highly spiritual and venerable personality and is the true heir of Adi Sankaracharya. The latter by his yogic powers absorbed the "Ugra Kalaa" of Goddess Kama Koti in the Kamakoti Chakram which he installed in this Peetham.

The present Guru came to the Gadi of this Peetham in 1907 A.D. He was born in May 1894 A.D. and his parents were Karnatak Brahmins who were highly devout. His Holiness is a linguist and knows many languages. His interest in music and fine arts is also of a very high order. On account of his vast learning and spiritual eminence, His Holiness has been enabled to attract men of all faiths who come to him for spiritual guidance and peace. He asks everybody to follow the tenets of his own faith. His Holiness has travelled widely all over Bharat. His daily

routine of Pooja and penance is very strenuous. His Holiness is highly devout and leads a simple and frugal life of great austerity. A gentle mellowness is visible in his sparkling eyes.

Another ancient temple at Kanchi is that of Kailasnath also called Rajasimheswara built by the Pallava king Rajasimha is about 667 A.D. The western Chalukya King Vikramaditya who invaded the Pallava country made improvements in this shrine.

There are several other Saiva temples in Siva kanchi. The Merrali temple is situated in the weavers' quarters. It is mentioned by saint Appar (670-681 A.D.). There is also a big lake called Sarvatirtha. In the centre is a temple and around the lake too there are numerous *Sivalingas*.

About two miles from Siva kanchi, there is Vishnukanchi which contains several ancient Vaishnavite temples, the most important of which is that of Varadaraja situated on a hillock. It is covered with numerous inscriptions. It was supported by the Vaishnava kings of Vijayanagar and was in the charge of their preceptors Tatacharyas. Gifts of several villages, jewellery and other equipment for the deity were made by the Vijayanagar rulers for the maintenance of this temple. It is said that Clive presented the deity a costly necklace worth Rs. 8,600.

Another famous yet ancient temple is the Vaikunthaperumal temple built by the great Pallava King Paramesvara or his successor Nandi Varman (730-800 A.D.). It was originally called Paramesvara-Vinnagaram and is of great archaeological and historical interest. This temple retains even to this day all the characteristic features of Pallava architecture. The sculptural representations of Vishnu in his different aspects and incarnations are depicted on its walls and in the niches just as the divine acts of Siva are depicted in the Kailasnath temple. But the other

important feature of the Vaikuntha-perumal temple is that on the verandah around the central shrine, events of Pallava history of the time of Nandivarman are depicted on a series of panels.

There are several other Vishnu shrines such as Pandava-perumal, Vilakkoti-perumal and others. Some of these were built by the great Vijaynagar ruler Krishna Deva Raya (1509 to 1530 A.D.)

All these massive shrines with their exquisite sculptures were intended to rouse the imagination and induce people to lead a life of purity and devotion. They also record in various inscriptions and panels the history of the land.

From the earliest time to about the middle of the ninth century, Kanchi remained the capital of the Pallava kings except for part of the sixth century. Then it came into the possession of the Cholas and remained with them upto the thirteenth century (except for the Rashtrakuta occupation from 945-970 A.D.). For some time it remained with Kakatiyas of Warrangal and the Pandya kings of Madurai. The Vijayanagar kings took it in the fourteenth century and retained it till the seventeenth. It subsequently passed into the hands of Mahomedans and Marathas, until Clive took it in 1753 A.D.

Vamana Purana says that among flowers Jati is the best, among towns Kanchi is the best, among women Rambha, among the four *asramas* the *Grihasthasrama*, among cities Dwaraka, and among countries Madhya-desa. The town of Kanchi, situated on the Kambai or Vegavati river "had towering palaces, high forts, deep moat, big streets, etc."

Lord Varadaraja is offered the following prayer by Brahma :

नमोऽस्तु ते पङ्कजपत्रलोचन !
 प्रसीद मह्यं प्रणतार्तिमञ्जन !।
 दृष्ट्वा भवन्तं वरदं वरेण्यं
 अद्य प्रपन्नोऽस्मि तवाङ्घ्रियुग्मम् ।

“Salutation be to you whose eyes are like the petals of lotus. Be graceful, you who remove the obstacle of those who seek you. I have this day seen you, the highest *Varada*, and I seek shelter at your feet.”

—*Brahmanda Purana.*

11 AYODHYA

यस्येक्ष्वाक्रुरूप व्रते रेवान्मराय्येधते । दिवीव पञ्चकृष्टयः ।

—Rigveda 10-60-4

"King Ikshvuku (of the solar race), ruler of this country, flourishes in his vow to protect his nationals. He is prosperous and bountiful to his public. By his effective counter-action, he is a bulwark of strength against foreign aggression. The entire population in his regime enjoys heavenly happiness".

AYODHYA, about 4 miles from Fyzabad, was the ancient capital of the Uttar Kosalas from where ruled many generations of kings of the illustrious Solar race. It culminated in the Rama-Rajya of the blameless and perfect Rama, the idol of the nation, who was revered as the deity incarnate.

Manu (about *B.C. 3100) was the first traditional king of India and he founded Ayodhya.

Ikshvaku was the eldest of Manu's nine sons who gave him Madhyadesa for his rule. Ikshvaku's eldest son Vikukshi succeeded him at Ayodhya, and of his other sons, Nimi founded the Videha line and Danda established himself in Dandaka. Paranjaya, son of Vikukshi, was given the title of "Kakutstha" as he was carried by Indra in the form of a bull on his back when invited to fight against demons.

After twenty generations from Manu in the same line lived the famous Mandhata, son of Yuvanasva and Gauri, who was a great Chakravartin and *Samrat* (about B.C. 2740). On his birth, Indra offered him his thumb for suck-

* The dates given here are those generally accepted by scholars after collating the Puranic and Vedic evidence.

ing nectar and that is the explanation of his name (*Mam Dhata*, he will suck me). He performed a hundred Asva-medha and Rajasuya sacrifices. This Mandhata, son of Yuvanasha, was not only a great Chakravartin, but is also identified with the Rishi Mandhata, son of Yuvanasha of *Rig Veda*, 10-134. Its first *Rik* states:

उमे यदिन्द्र रोदसी आपप्राथोषा इव ।

महान्तं त्वां महीनां सम्राजं चर्षणीनाम् ।

देवी जनयित्र्यजीजनद मद्रा जनयित्र्यजीजनत् ॥

"O Indra! You are like the Dawn, and fill the entire heaven and earth with your lustre. You are greater than the great among gods. You are the *samrat* among men. Hail to your Divine Mother Aditi! Blessed be the mother who gave birth to you!"

(RV. 10-134-1).

The poetic sentiments expressed in this *sukta* by this royal sage are appropriate in the mouth of a warm-hearted and illustrious *Samrat* who loved his land and his mother. The royal sage says in RV. 10-134-7 that rulers of his race had always followed the rule of Law "मन्त्रं श्रुत्य च रामसि" "We follow the injunctions laid down in authoritative texts". This was a noted characteristic of Rama's *Raghukula*.

Ayodhya is on the banks of the Sarayu river. This river rises from the Kumayun mountains and after meeting Kali it is called Ghagra or Gogra in Oudh. Sarayu is mentioned along with Saraswati and Sindhu in *Rigveda*, 10-64-9. These 21 rivers are invited to the Yagna; they are called divine mothers and inspirers. Their waters are described as milk, butter and honey.

One of the famous successors of Mandhata was *Samra* Harischandra, well-known in history for his success in passing the test of truthfulness at the hands of the very strict examiner Visvamitra (about B.C. 2540). Harischandra's

sixth descendant, Bahu, was attacked by Haihayas and had to seek shelter in the *asrama* of Sage Aurva. Bahu's son Sagara, again regained power and became great and powerful. He is called *Sa+Gara*, or poisoned, because his step-mother administered poison to his mother before he was born. He is also connected with the ocean which is called Sagara's son or Sagara.

Sage Kapila had cursed the descendants of Sagara for misdemeanour and *Samrat* Bhagiratha saved them. He constructed a net-work of canals and brought the Ganges down from the Himalayas. After a few mishaps to the Solar line, another big *Samrat* of Ayodhya was Dilipa Khatvanga. His son Raghu, after whom Rama's dynasty is named, performed the famous Visvajit Sacrifice and gave away his entire wealth in *dana*. He was followed by Aja and then Dasaratha.

Dasaratha, who had no son, performed the *Putrakamesti Yajna* with the help of sage Rishyasringa who was propitiated by getting him married to Romapada's adopted (and Dasaratha's natural) daughter Santa. As a result of the *Yajna*, Dasaratha had four sons Sri Rama, Bharatha, Lakshmana and Satrugna.

Sri Rama, 65th descendant of Manu (i.e. in about B.C. 1950) became the ruler of the whole of Bharat by inheritance and conquest, reaching as far south as Ceylon; he became the ideal to be followed by all kings.

Rama divided his kingdom between his sons and nephews. Kusa succeeded Rama in Ayodhya or according to some, in Kusavati. Lava was given Uttara Kosala with Sravasti as the Capital. Bharata's sons Taksha and Pushkara founded Takshasila (Taxila) and Pushkaravati respectively, in Gandhara. Surasena, and Subahu, sons of Satrugna established Mathura and Vidisa (Bhilsa) res-

pectively. Lakshmana's sons were assigned territories in the Himalayan regions.

At the time of the Mahabharata War (about 1400 B.C.) which was after about 30 generations from Sri Rama, Brihadbahu was the King of Ayodhya. He was killed by Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna. *Mastyia Purana* gives a further genealogical tree and states that after the Mahabharata War, Siddharta Gautama, the Buddha, flourished as the 25th descendant in the Solar line.

Mahabharata mentions sixteen *Samrats* (*Shodasa Rajakiyam*: Shanti: 28) out of which six belong to Ayodhya. They are Mandatri, Sagara, Bhagiratha, Ambarisha, Dilipa Khatvanga, and Rama.

Ayodhya is also a sacred place for Jains. The first of the twenty-four Tirthankaras, Adinath or Rishabhadeva was of the Ikshvaku race and the son of King Nabhi. Twenty-one other Tirthankaras are also said belong to the Ikshvaku race. Ayodhya is the birth place of Rishabha, Ajita, Abhinandana, Sumati, Ananta, and Achala. Adinath received enlightenment on the Astavata Mount near Ayodhya.

In Buddha's time, Ayodhya was comparatively an insignificant town, but Saketa, identified with Ayodhya, was a flourishing city. Perhaps the one was the suburb of the other. Sravasti (Sahet-Mahet) is also mentioned as a great city and as the Kosala capital. Mahakosala and his son Prasenajit were rulers of Kosala in Buddha's time.

Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang both visited Ayodhya. The latter says it was 5000 *li* in circumference. He further says that Asanga and Vasubandhu had lived there; that in his time there were twenty Buddhist monasteries and 3000 students of Mahayana and Hinayana. The famous tooth-brush tree of Buddha grew in Ayodhya. There was an Asoka stupa at a place called Mani Purbat where

Buddha preached his doctrines. Maitreyanatha lived here in the latter part of the 3rd century A.D. and wrote several works on Vijnanavada or Buddhist idealism. Asanga and his younger brother Vasubandhu developed the doctrines of Maitreyanatha and accepted the Yogachara School.

Vasishtha and his family are connected with rulers of Ayodhya as hereditary priests. Vasishtha is referred to as the son of Mitravaruna and Urvashi and the younger brother of Agastya. He was so friendly with Varuna that "Varuna and he moved in a boat and also sat on the same swing". He is the *Rishi* of the seventh Mandala of *Rigveda*. King Sudasa made him his *Purohita* on account of his learning and efficiency; and with his spiritual help he won the Dasarajna War. His well-known dispute with Visvamitra is referred to in *Rig Veda*.

One Vasishtha was the Brahma-priest in the Rajasuya sacrifice of King Harischandra. Vasishthas used to comb and tie up their hair on the right side. Just as Visvamitra is the *Rishi* of the famous *Gayatri Mantra*, Vasishtha is the *Rishi* of the famous *Maha-Mrityunjaya Mantra* (R.V. 7-59-12). In *Puranas*, he is said to be one of the ten mind-born sons of Brahma. Sakti, Parasara, Vyas, and Suka are Vasishtha's son, grandson, great-grandson and great-great grandson respectively. Vasishtha was in possession of the desire-yielding cow "Nandini".

Ayodhya is mentioned as the first of the seven sacred cities: Ayodhya, Mathura, Haridwara, Kasi, Kanchi, Ujjain and Dwaraka. The place where Dasaratha performed the *Putrakameshti* sacrifice is pointed out near Lakad Mandi. There are numerous Vaishnava and Saiva temples and a few mosques in the city.

Skandapurana says that Ayodhya or the city of Vishnu (Rama) is in the shape of a fish. Pilgrims bathe at the Svargadwara, the Ram Ghat. There is the Saiva

temple of Nagesvara. In the garden there is the Saiva temple of Darsaneswara. In the town there is the famous Hanumangari temple with a big seated-image of Hanuman. Monkeys are numerous in this locality. About half a mile from Hanumangari is the Janmasthan where Rama was born. It is said that King Vikramaditya built a temple here but it was destroyed by Babar, who built a mosque on the spot. There was a communal dispute about this place in 1855 A.D. The Veragi Vaishnavas who have established many Maths and Akhadas in Ayodhya installed sacred images in front of the mosque. The two places were then separated by a wall. Another famous temple is that of Kanaka Bhavan. On the gold-plated *Simhasana* there are images of Rama and Sita with golden crowns. It is said that this place was the palace of Kaikeyi, Ramas's step-mother.

Skanda mentions many other sub-*tirthas* in Ayodhya like Gopratarā, Chakratirtha, Agnitirtha and others.

Valmiki, the author of the Sanskrit *Ramayana*, is said to be the son of a brahmin, Sumati. He was brought up by Kiratas, and he took up the life of a robber. A sage gave him advice and taught him the *Rama Mantra*. He performed penance for such a long time that there was an anthill or *valmika* over his body. He received banished Sita in his hermitage, brought up Kusa and Lava and taught them *Ramayana*. He is traditionally called the author of the first verse in classical Sanskrit which he composed when he was overpowered with emotion on seeing a hunter killing one of a pair of birds.

Tulsidas, the Hindi *Mahakavi*, is the author of the most famous work the *Ramacharitamanasa*. He is a household name and crores of people have been initiated into devotion and spiritualism as a result of this masterpiece. He was born at Rajapur (A.D. 1531 to A.D. 1622).

His father's name was Atmaram Dube and mother's was Hulsī. He is said to have been born with teeth and in the Mula *Nakshatra* which being considered inauspicious, he was discarded by his father. His mother died soon after his birth. He was somehow brought up and then met his Guru Naraharidas who took him to Kasi. He joined the Ramanandi Math at the Panchagangā Ghat at Kasi and acquired knowledge in the various *Sastras*. He married Ratnavali, daughter of Dinabandhu Pathak. He loved her so much that once he followed her to her parents' house. She was angry and taunted him. This brought about a complete change in his life and he turned to spiritualism. He wandered for twenty years, and lived long at Chitrakuta where he realised the Darsana of Sri Rama.

His learning was appreciated even by profound scholars like Madhusudana Saraswati. His other friends were Abdul Rahim Khankhana, Maharaj Mansingh, Nabhaji, and Todermall. He was the author of numerous works but his immortal *Ramacharitamansa* has reached every cottage and is sung by all, high and low, with utmost devotion and veneration. To write this work, Tulsidas went to Ayodhya. The work was completed after two years seven months and twenty-six days in S.Y. 1633. The following *Mantra* of Tulsidas in Balakanda 145, 2-3, is said to give to the faithful a vision of Sri Rama :

जौ अनाथहित हम पर नेह ।
 तौ प्रसन्न होइ यह वह देह ।
 जो स्वरूप बस सिव मन माहीं ।
 जेहि कारन सुनि जतन कराहीं ।
 जो भुसुंढि मन मानस हंसा ।
 सगुन अगुन जेहि निगम प्रससा ।
 देखहि हम सो रूप मरि लोचन ।
 कृपा करहु प्रनतारति मोचन ।

"O benefactor of the helpless! If you love us, then be pleased to shower your graces in this way. You, the remover of the worries of those who seek you! Be kind in allowing us to fill our eyes to our hearts' content with that form of yours which abides in the mind of Siva, for the seeing of which sages are toiling ceaselessly, that form which is like a Hansa in the Manasa or mind of Kaka-bhusundi, and that which has been prayed in the Vedas both as Saguna (with form) and Nirguna (formless).

12. MATHURA

DEVAKI visualises the Divine on Krishna's birth and prays:

रूपं यत्तत्प्राहुरव्यक्तमाद्यं
ब्रह्म ज्योतिर्निर्गुणं निर्विकारम् ।
सत्तामात्रं निर्विशेषं निरीहं
स त्वं साक्षाद् विष्णुरध्यात्मदीपः ॥

Bhagavata X-3-24.

"Vedas describe you as the non-manifest, the first cause, the Brahman, the resplendent consciousness, one without qualities or modifications, pure existence without any particularity or desires. You are Vishnu incarnate who illuminates the intellect, mind and other internal organs."

Mathura is situated on the right bank of Yamuna between Delhi and Agra and is reputed to have been founded by Satrugghna, brother of Rama. The place was known as Madhuvana and Madhu ruled it. He and his son Lavana challenged Rama who sent Satrugghna to deal with them. Madhu and Lavana were killed in the fight and Satrugghna founded the city of Mathura.

From the Solar race, the area came under the rule of the Yadavas. The Yadu king Ugrasena had a son Kamsa and a daughter Devaki. The latter was married to Vasudeva. Kamsa is depicted as a tyrant and it was predicted that the eighth child of Devaki would kill him. Kamsa who was supposed to be the great demon Kalanemi in human form, usurped his father's throne and when he learnt of the prophecy, he imprisoned his sister and Vasudeva and put to death six of their children immediately after they were born. The seventh embryo was miraculous-

ly transferred to Rohini, another wife of Vasudeva, and Sankarshana (a son born of extraction and transference) or Balarama was born of her. The eighth child born at Mathura in the prison cell was Krishna, worshipped by Hindus as Purna Purusottama and the eighth incarnation of Vishnu. Vasudeva exchanged Krishna with the daughter of Nanda and Yashoda at Gokul. Kamsa tried to kill her, the Yoganidra, but she went miraculously up to heaven and became Durga to the great terror of Kamsa.

Krishna's boyhood and youth are described in detail in *Harivamsa* and the 10th Skandha of *Bhagavata*. Efforts were made by Kamsa to kill Krishna at Gokul but they were a failure. Ultimately Krishna accepted the treacherous invitation of Kamsa, came to Mathura, killed Kamsa, and re-established Ugrasena on the throne. Kamsa was the son-in-law of Jarasandha, the powerful ruler of Magadha. The latter, in vengeance, invaded Mathura several times and so Krishna for the safety of the Yadavas decided to leave Mathura and established himself in Dwarka in Saurashtra. Kalayavana was also harassing the population of Mathura; so that was the additional reason for the exodus.

Mathura is a celebrated centre of pilgrimage being the birth-place of Krishna. *Varaha Purana* says that the Mathura Mandala is 20 *yojanas* in measure and any one bathing in Yamuna is purified from all sins. It is said that a sin committed elsewhere is destroyed in a Tirtha but a sin committed in a Tirtha sticks hard. This is true of other Tirthas but in Mathura, the sin committed there is destroyed in Mathura itself—such is said to be the greatness of the Tirtha.

मथुरायां कृतं पापं मथुरायां विनश्यति ।

In the word मथुरा derived from Mathura, M, U, and

A are said to represent the three components of the Mystic syllable "aum". They also represent the three divinities of the Hindu Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva.

Krishna figures in the *Mahabharata* story at the time of the Svayamvara of Draupadi; he is the friend, guide and philosopher of the Pandavas, and instructs Bhima to kill Jarasandha of Magadha while he himself kills Sisupala, the Chedi king. He acted as ambassador of peace in the great war and then as Arjuna's guide and charioteer. After Krishna perished in the forest, Arjuna established Vajra, the surviving grandson of Krishna, on the throne of Mathura. Historicity of Krishna is not now questioned by scholars nor is it questioned by any one that he was the same cow herd hero at Gokul who established Dwaraka, helped Pandavas, and was the great Royal sage who gave to posterity the *Bhagavad Gita* which is called the Yoga-sastra, and is placed on the level of Upanishads, and is reverentially referred to in the plural.

The deification of Krishna as an Avatara of Vishnu must have taken place long before the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali and even Panini (5th century B.C.). Panini refers to Vasudevakas, i.e. persons whose object of worship is Vasudeva. Megasthenes (4th century B.C.) says that in Surasena country of which Mathura was the capital, Herakles (Vasudeva-Krishna) was specially worshipped. Heliodorus (2nd century B.C.) the great Ambassador of the Indo-Greek King Antialcidas was a devotee of Vasudeva Krishna. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, Krishna, son of Devaki, is referred to as a sage and disciple of Ghora Angiras. The latter was a worshipper of the Sun and laid emphasis on the right conduct. Krishna who liberated kings and women from the prison of Jarasandha really put a stop to an intended human sacrifice. So he prevented the inhuman treatment meted out to women by Jarasandha and

thus emphasised the best way to live. In *Rig eda*, Vishnu is referred to as Gopa or Cowherd. विष्णुर्गोपा अदाम्यः The Jain tradition is that Vasudeva-Krishna was a contemporary of the Jain Tirthankara Arishtanemi who preceded Parsvanath. The Buddhist canonical works *Mahaniddeśa* and *Chullaniddeśa* (1st century A.D.) mention worshippers of Vasudeva and Balarama.

Krishna was identified with the vedic Vishnu as His Avatara and so the Vasudeva cult and the Bhagavata religion flourished.

In the नारायणोपनिषद् 1-6 we have the नारायण गायत्री viz. नारायणाय विद्महे वासुदेवाय धीमहि । तन्नो विष्णुः प्रचोदयात् ॥ Here Vasudeva is identified with Vishnu and Narayana. Nara and Narayana are identified with Arjuna and Krishna. The Narayaniya section of *Santi Parva* states that Narayana is the Supreme Being and Krishna is Its Avatara.

The Bhagavata religion which had its rise in the land of the Yadavas, Satvatas, and Vrishnis of Mathura spread widely to the North and West and also in the South. The name of the Pandya capital Madura is the same as Madhura or Mathura, the homeland of the Bhagavata religion.

Mahakachhayana, one of the famous disciples of Buddha, actively preached Buddhism in Mathura. When Buddha visited the city, he noticed the abundance of women-folk. It is mentioned as the most famous place in *Milinda Panha*. Upagupta, the preceptor of Emperor Asoka whom he converted to Buddhism was the son of Gupta and a perfumer. The accepted view is that Upagupta was born in Mathura where he built a big Buddhist monastery which existed till the 7th century A.D. He converted many people of Mathura to Buddhism. Eighteen thousand pupils attained sainthood through Upagupta.

The well-known courtesan Vasavadatta, who was ultimately converted to Buddhism was a resident of Mathura. Fa-Hien called Mathura the Peacock city. In his day Buddhism was flourishing here. Hieun Tsang also visited it and found it 20 *li* in circuit. In his day there were five Deva temples, three stupas built by Asoka, twenty Buddhist monasteries and 2000 Buddhist priests.

Mathura was also a famous centre of Jainism during the reigns of the Kusana kings. Here and there are ruins of a Jain shrine of the pre-Christian period and a number of small inscriptions, images, tablets, arches, etc. from the 1st century onwards. References are also available of Jain teachers and the donors. One Jain inscription refers to the Chaturvarna sangha of the Jain community which consisted of four classes of monks, nuns, lay brothers and sisters.

Mathura was thus a centre of Bhagavata religion, prior to Buddhism and Jainism, even before the 6th century B.C. Later on for several centuries Buddhism and Jainism flourished in this area. From the statement of Hieun Tsang it appears that in the 7th century, A.D. orthodox Hinduism was again re-establishing itself and was equally prominent. By the eleventh century, Mathura was completely dominated by orthodox Hinduism. Buddhism had disappeared in 1017 A.D. when Mohamad of Gazni burned the city.

Varaha Purana mentions various places in Mathura as connected with incidents in Krishna's life. Visranti Ghat (Visram Ghat) on the bank of Yamuna is pointed out as the place where Krishna rested after killing the tyrant Kamsa. Kamsa ka Tila near the Southern Gate of Mathura is identified with the place where Kamsa was killed. The Yog Ghat is the place where Kamsa dashed Nanda's daughter Yoganidra to the ground.

Bhutesvara Mahadeo's Temple is the place where there was the Stupa of Sariputta, one of the famous disciples of Buddha.

The Kesav Deo Temple was built on the site of the great Buddhist monastery called Yasa Vihara.

It is clear that Buddhist stupas or monasteries were built on holy spots of orthodox Hinduism and with the decline of Buddhism, temples of the orthodox Hindu faith were again constructed in the very same places.

The Kesav Deo Temple was destroyed by Mahmud of Gazni in 1017 A.D. but it was soon rebuilt. Sikandar Lodi destroyed it and again it was restored. Tavernier saw the temple in the beginning of Aurangzeb's reign in about 1659 [A.D. Aurangzeb destroyed it again. It has again been restored.

The present temple of Dwarkadisa is the biggest temple in Mathura. Worship is conducted according to the Vallabha Sampradaya.

From Visram Ghat starts the perambulation of five *krosas*. It is considered very meritorious to bathe in Yamuna on Kartik 2nd day of the bright half which is known as *Yama Dvitiya*. Yama is said to have gone to his sister Yamuna on this day and on being satisfied with a good meal provided by his sister, he promised her that any one who bathed in Yamuna on that day of the year would be relieved of going to the region of Yama.

The Potra Kunda is identified with the place where the baby clothes of Krishna were washed.

In the north is situated the temple of Mahavidya.

Ganga purifies one by a bath, Yamuna by the drinking of her sweet waters.

In the ruins of old Mathura many objects of archaeological importance have been found. Many mounds have been dug in the surrounding area and objects of Brahmanic

Buddhist and Jaina sculptures, images, inscriptions and other remains of great historical and archaeological importance have been excavated. These objects are preserved in the Indian Museum at Calcutta and the Curzon Museum at Mathura.

Mathura sculptures are mainly in the spotted red sandstone. The main figure is raised in height and is prominently depicted. The figures are carved out boldly. Those representing action, particularly the feminine figures, show abundant sensuality. What was only a spontaneous gesture in the early art has become in the Mathura art conscious gestures and the symbolic expression has become sensuous and erotic. Foreign influence is also visible. Kaniska's statue with a peculiar dress and heavy boots indicate the Scythic tradition and the Bacchanalian scenes are influenced by the Western Art.

By about the 15th century A.D. Mathura became the centre of the Vaishnava reformers. Ramanujites established themselves in Brindavan. The Nimbarka Vaishnavas have one of their oldest shrines on the Dhruva Hill at Mathura. The Bengali Vaishnavas, the Radha Vallabhis and disciples of Swami Haridas also spread their cult in this area. Rupa and Sanatana Gosains were the recognised leaders of the Brindavan community and they were the authors of several works. They were helped in their work by their nephew Jiva Gosain. Rupa flourished in about 1500-1560 A.D. Sanatana, Rupa and Vallabha are considered to be three brothers. Rupa was the minister of Hussainshah. He and Sanatana were the pupils of Chaitanya.

Vallabhacharya, whose descendants are known as Gokul Gosains, was the second son of Lakshmana Bhatta, a Tailangana Brahmin of the Vishnu-swami Sampradaya. He was born in 1479 A.D. in North India at a place called

Champaranya near Banaras while his parents were on a pilgrimage. On account of some alarm he was left behind but was soon taken back by his parents and brought to Banaras where he mastered the Sanskrit language and Indian philosophy. He became a religious teacher and is said to have won the Sastrartha at Vijaynagar where Krishna Deva Raya accepted him as a great Acharya. He is the author of *Anubhashya*, *Subodhini*, *Tatvarthadeepa*, and numerous other works and his Sampradaya is known as the Suddhadvaita or Pushti Marga. He worshipped Balakrishna. His Sampradaya has spread much in Rajputana and Gujarat particularly among the wealthy Bania and Bhatia communities. He visited many places including Jagannath Puri, where it is said that the Lord summarised the doctrine in the following verse:—

एकं शास्त्रं देवकीपुत्रगीतं
 एको देवो देवकीपुत्र एव ।
 मन्त्रोऽप्येकस्तस्य नामानि यानि
 कर्माप्येकं तस्य देवस्य सेवा ।

“There is only one scripture and that is one sung by the son of Devaki, Krishna, as the *Bhagavad Gita*. There is only one God and that is Krishna. There is only one *Mantra* being the various names of Krishna. There is only one duty and that is the seva or worship of that Krishna.”

There are 12 *vanas* in the vicinity of Mathura. They are Madhuban, Talaban, Kumudban, Bahulaban, Kamaban, Khadiraban, Brindaban, Bhadraban, Bhandirban, Belban, Lohaban, and Mohaban.

Gokul and Govardhana counted among the Upavanas.

On Vaisakha Purnima, there is the festival of Vana-Vihara from the Visram Ghat. The Pancha Tirtha Mela begins for five days from Sravan Sukla 5th pilgrims

starting from Mathura to Brindaban. Numerous other festivals take place during the course of the year.

The other famous ghat on Yamuna is the Dhruva Ghat. The legend is that Dhruva, the son of King Uttanapada, when insulted by his father and step-mother, came down to Madhuban near Mathura and as instructed by Narada performed severe penance even though a child and ultimately realised the Darsana of Vishnu. He was so young that on seeing the Lord, he was speechless and the Lord gave him speech by touching his cheek with His conch which was nothing but the embodiment of Vedas. *Bhagavata* says, Dhruva immediately obtained the power of speech and sang :

योऽन्तः प्रविश्य मम वाचमिमां प्रसुप्तां
सञ्जीवयत्यखिलशक्तिधरः स्वधाम्ना ।
अन्यांश्च हस्तचरणश्रवणत्वगादीन्
प्राणान्नमो भगवते पुरुषाय तुभ्यम् ॥

Obeisance be unto you, the Lord and the manifestation of the Supreme Principle. You are my Antaryamin or the inner controller and with your supreme power and resplendent consciousness, you have enkindled to life this speech of mine which till now had remained dormant, as also my hands, feet, ears, sense of touch and the rest, including my very life-breath.

Bhagavata IV-9-6.

13. PANDHARPUR

इष्टिकायां समपदं तत्त्वमस्यादिलक्षणम् ।
 कटिविन्यस्तहस्ताब्जं प्रणवाकृतिसौरसम् ।
 ऊर्ध्वबीजसमाख्यातं पूर्णेन्दुमुखमण्डनम् ॥
 सर्वभूषणशोभाढ्यमीदृशं मोक्षदं नृणाम् ।
 अज्ञानजनबोधार्थं तिष्ठामीह जनार्दनः ।
 विठठलः परमो देवस्त्रयीरूपेण तिष्ठति ॥

—भविष्योत्तर, पांडुरंग महात्म्य

“Viththala Panduranga, the highest, stands at Pandharpur as the embodiment of the three Vedas. It is I, Vishnu Janardana, who is standing there with feet firmly balanced on a brick to impart knowledge to the ignorant people, the one who can only be indicated by the Upanishadic Mahavakyas like “That thou art” (*Tattvamasi*). The image has the lotus-like hands placed on the waist; it is highly agreeable on account of its having the shape of Omkara. This deity is the highest truth, his face shines like the full-moon; his form is richly decorated with ornaments, and he gives liberation to the faithful.”

PANDHARPUR, situated forty miles west of Sholapur, is one of the most frequented places of pilgrimage in the State of Bombay. It is on the bank of river Bhima, also known as Chandrabhaga, which is a tributary of Krishna. The chief attraction of the town is the temple of Vithoba situated in the centre and on the river bank.

The temple is built on an area 350 × 170 feet. It has six gates. The chief or the front gate on the east side is called the Namdev gate, Namdev being the first great Vaishnava saint of Maharashtra who flourished in the 13th

century A.D. Near the first step there is a brass bust of Namdev. The tradition is that at this place there is the *Samadhi* of Namdev, the tailor-saint who was the inhabitant of Pandharpur. Opposite Namdev's bust is a stone in a deep recess which is worshipped as the abode of Chokhamela, a Mahar devotee of Vithoba who flourished about 1278 A.D.

In the inner chamber or *garbhagriha* 8 × 8 feet is the image of Vithoba, also called Pandurang, Pandhari, Viththala, or Viththalnath. The standing image of stone is about three feet nine inches with a base of one foot square. Its appearance has become rough due to the effect of time. Dr. Bhagawanlal Indraji, writing about the Vithoba temple in the *Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol. 20, states that the dress and ornament of the image belong to a little later than the Guptas, probably not later than the fifth or sixth century after Christ. *Padmapurana* (Uttara Khanda) mentions Viththala's image on Bhimarathi and Dr. Kane states that this portion of the *Padmapurana* cannot be placed earlier than 1000 A.D. Hemadri (1260 A.D.) in his work on Tirtha quotes *Skanda* to describe this Tirtha.

In a copper plate inscription of Bendigere of 1249 A.D., Pundarika Kshetra and Vithoba are referred to. In a stone inscription at Pandharpur of 1270 A.D., a reference is made to the *Aptoryama* sacrifice at Panduranga-pura by which Vithoba was pleased. There is another inscription in the Vithoba temple of 1237 A.D. referring to God Viththaladeva residing in Pandarge who made the heart of Sage Pundarika expand with devotion. A copper plate inscription of the Rashtrakuta king Avidheya believed to be of 516 A.D. records a grant of Pandaranga-Palli and four other villages to a Brahmin Jayad-Vittha. The part of the name Vittha is rightly believed to be an early form of Viththala. The last inscription takes back the

Vithoba temple to a date earlier than the sixth century A.D.

Vithoba is a form of Krishna. His consort is Rukmini or Rakhumai. The name Vithoba means Father Viththala. Viththala is taken to have been derived from the word Vishnu in Kannada where it becomes Vitta. The name Viththala is also derived from *Vit+tha+la*, i.e. one who receives for giving His grace those who are without (*tha*) knowledge (*vit*). Pandurang is a Sanskritised form of Pandarga i.e. of Pandarge which was the old name of Pandharpur. After its association with the story of Pundalik, the place became known as Pundarika-pura or Paundarika-pura.

The story of Pundalik is told this way. Pundalik, an inhabitant of Pandharpur, was the son of a Brahmin Janudev and his wife Muktabai. Pundalik was ill-treating his parents. He made them work in spite of their old age and treated them cruelly. Once they all started on a pilgrimage. On the way they met the dutiful cobbler Rohidas attending his parents. At night, Pundalik saw some heavenly female figures. He fell at the feet of one of them and requested her to reveal her identity. She said they were the sacred rivers of India who had come to Rohidas to purify themselves as they had become impure with the sins of the numerous sinful pilgrims bathing in them. Then she told him that there was no sin worse than the ill-treatment of parents. Pundalik repented of his sin and changed overnight in his treatment of his parents. After this incident, Pundalik remained engrossed in serving his parents. Krishna and Rukmini once came near his door but Pundalik continued his filial service. He threw a brick towards Krishna to stand and wait till he finished his work. After completion of that work, he worshipped Krishna. The merciful Lord was pleased with his filial affection and on Pundalik's special

request, He agreed to stay there on the brick on which he stood and became Viththala—standing on the brick. Since then started the mass cry पुंडरीकवरदा हरि विठ्ठल — the Hari Viththala who was graceful to Pundalik. About 500 yards from Vithoba's temple is the temple of Pundalik.

Behind Vithoba's temple is the temple of His consort Rakhumai.

Worship is carried on with great elaboration. The staff of priests and attendants consist of Badvas (Pujaris), Benaris (Hymnists), Paricharaks (Bathmen), Haridasas (Singers), Dingres (Barbers), Danges (Mace-bearers) and Divtes (Light men). Badvas or Pujaris take the chief part in worship.

The mass of Maharashtra Vaishnavas worships Vithoba, who is Vishnu addressed with the soft and affectionate suffix Ba. He is Krishna and stories associated with Krishna's childhood are current about Him. Janmashtami is celebrated with great enthusiasm and with curds. But here Krishna is not Radha-Vallabha but the Lord of Rukmini or Rakhumai. The Vaishnava religion here is mainly derived from the *Puranas* and augmented by the great Vaishnava saints of Maharashtra who flourished from 13th to 17th centuries A.D. Though influenced, it is not particularly associated with any one single Sampradaya or Acharya. The Maharashtra saints preached in Marathi and a majority of them were Sudras. This also accounts for a large number of devout adherents in the lower strata of the society.

The Varkaris are the time-keeping pilgrims. Most of them belong to the lower classes and are opposed to Brahmin exclusiveness. The sect is very catholic and includes even Muhammadans. The sect was founded in the 13th century by Jnanesvar. He himself did not make converts, he only visited Pandharpur.

Jnanesvar (1275 to 1296 A.D.) was the great founder of the Bhagwata religion in Maharashtra. He was a Maha-Yogin and an unrivalled author. He was influenced by the Nath Sampradaya. The tradition is that Matsyendranath took initiation from Lord Sankara; Goraknath from Matsyendranath; and Gahininath from Gorakhnath. It is further said that Gahininath initiated Nivrittinath at Brahmagiri (Tryambak) and Jnanesvar was initiated by his elder brother Nivrittinath. Most of these Nathas appear to be historical persons. Some of them like Jalandhar are claimed by Bengal; others by Maharashtra. There is a *samadhi* of Matsyendranath in the Satara District.

Looking at Jnaneswar's achievements, the spiritual lights of Nathas was undoubtedly staggering. The great-grandfather of Jnanesvar was Tryambakpant and it is said that he was initiated by Goraknath. Jnandev's father Viththalpant was the Kulkarni of Apegaon near Panthan on the Godavari. He had married Rakhmabai, the daughter of Siddhopant, the Kulkarni of Alandi. After his father's death, Viththalpant lost all interest in life and having no sons, he left for Banaras, and became a sanyasin by name Chaitanyasram. His Guru once came to Alandi, saw his miserable wife, and ordered his disciple to again become a house-holder. Later on Viththalpant had four children—Nivrittinath, Jnanesvar, Sopan and Muktabai. They were all born within 2 or 3 years after each elder one; and they were all short-lived. There is some controversy regarding their dates of birth but *Jnanesvari*, the famous commentary on Gita, was written in 1290 A.D. As they were the children of a sanyasin turned again into a householder, orthodox Brahmins did not sanction the Sacred-Thread ceremonies of these Brahmin children. It is said that after feeling their high yogic and spiritual powers they relented. Perhaps with

the help of Hemadri Bopdev and others, they got a *Suddhi* patra from Paithan.

The famous works of Jnanesvar are his *Jnanesvari*, *Amritanubhava*, *Abhangas*, and *Changdeva Pasashti*. *Jnanesvari* is full of charming illustrations and new theories, and it is still unrivalled and the best work in Marathi literature and has been translated into numerous other languages. It is the work of a great philosopher and yogin who was also the Jnanottara Bhakta writing after self-realisation and his words spoken with authority go straight to the heart. His brethren are also credited with having composed a few Abhangas.

Jnanraj was the most important philosopher saint but Namdev, believed to be his contemporary and survivor, wrote simple appealing devotional songs and was a great Bhakta Kavi of Maharashtra. He was the son of a tailor Damaseth and his wife Gomabai, and is believed to have been born in 1270 A.D. He has sung of the greatness of Pandhari whom he calls his Kamadhenu. The following song is illustrative of his tender emotions:

तू माझी माउली, मी वो तुझा तान्हा	
पाजी प्रेमपान्हा, पांडुरंगे	॥ १ ॥
तू माझी गाउली, मी तुझे वासरुं	
नको पान्हा चोरुं, पांडुरंगे	॥ २ ॥
तू माझी हरिणी, मी तुझे पाडस	
तोडीं भवपाश, पांडुरंगे	॥ ३ ॥
तू माझी पक्षिणी, मी तुझे अंडज	
चारा घालीं मज, पांडुरंगे	॥ ४ ॥
नामा म्हणे होसी भवतीचा वालमा	
माणें पुढें उभा, सांभाळिशो	॥ ५ ॥

"My mother thou, thy sucking babe am I;
Feed me with love, my Pandurang, I cry.
I am the calf with thou the mother cow;

Thy milk, my Pandurang, withhold not now.
 I am thy fawn, the mother doe thou art;
 Rend the world's snare, my Pandurang, apart.
 Thou mother bird and I among thy brood;
 O fly, my Pandurang, and bring me food;
 Ah, heart's beloved, hear thy Nama say,
 On every side thou hedgest up my way."

[Macnicol's Translation — Heritage of India Series—
 Oxford University Press.]

Among the contemporaries of Namdev are counted Gora Kumbhar, Visoba Khechar, Savanta Mali, Narhari Sonar, Chokha Mela, Janabai, Sena, and Kanhopatra.

Eknath (1533-1599 A.D.) was another important figure in the Bhāgvat religion after Jñanesvar and Namdev. He prepared a correct edition of *Jñanesvari* and gave it to the world in 1584 A.D. on Kapila Shashthi. He is the author of numerous works, the most well-known being *Eknathi Bhagvata*. He received from Janardanswami the *Mantra* of Viththala and the advice to give food to all irrespective of caste or creed.

Considered the last in the line but the most famous of these saints was Tukaram (1607 to 1649 A.D.) born at Dehu, 14 miles from Poona. He was a Marathi Kunbi and he notes that he had become insolvent in the middle of his life, i.e. at the age of 21 years. His eighth ancestor Visvambhar who was a great devotee of Vithoba, had found in the ground an image of the Lord, and he established it at Dehu. Tukaram was the son of Bolhoba and Kanakai. His elder brother was Savji and younger was Kanhoba. His father died when he was 17; then his elder brother whose wife died, left the house. There was a famine and Tukaram's first wife died, also his eldest son. All this made him turn to God. He arranged a partition of their property with his younger brother—one half of

the precious documents of property he gave to his younger brother and the documents coming to his share he threw away in the Indrayani river. He used to go to the Bhambnath Hill near Dehu for meditation and worshipped Vithoba in the temple. He used to do small jobs for people to maintain himself. He started *kirtans* and for that purpose composed Abhangas. His guru Babaji, a descendant of Kesavchaitanya and Ragavachaitanya, appeared to him in a dream and enjoined upon him to repeat the words Rama, Krishna, Hari at the beginning of all devotions. Tukaram popularised the worship of Vithoba. Large crowds came to hear his *kirtans* and *Abhangas*. Even Shivaji Maharaj heard his *kirtans* at Lohagaon and presented him gold mohurs which Tukaram distributed among Brahmins.

Tukaram himself did not proselytise but his followers made many disciples. His sect was divided into two sections, Dehukar and Vaskar. All these *varkaris* have marks of *gopichandan*, garlands of Tulsi, fast on Ekadasi, and do Hari-bhajan. They must go to Pandharpur on the great Ekadasis of Ashadha and Katrika. On these occasions *palkhis* or palanquins of Sri Jnanesvar Maharaj and Tukaram are taken out. They meet in Poona and remain there for one day on Jeshtha Krishna 10th. The crowds shout with devotion. "Sri Jnanesvar Mauli Samarth" and have their *darsana*. *Palkhis* of other saints are also taken out but the devotees mainly crowd around those of Jnanesvar and Tukaram. On the way many more devotees join the procession of these Bhajan Mandalis. Along the road the villagers reverently receive these *varkaris* and supply them with food. On Ashadha Sukla 10th they reach Pandharpur. For several centuries, these *varkari* procession and *palkhis* have regularly gone this way. It has united the masses and satisfied their reli-

gious thirst. High and low are all treated on the same level and lakhs of people collect in this way year after year without any invitation, and poor villagers gladly take the responsibility of treating them hospitably, supplying them with cartloads of breads and simple food. With a full-throated voice, they sing "Jnanba Tukaram, Jnanba Tukaram."

Tukaram says :

नेणों फुंको कान । नाहीं एकांताचें ज्ञान ॥ १ ॥
तुम्ही आइका हो संत ।

माझा सादर वृत्तांत ॥ ध्रु ॥
नाहीं देखिला तो डोळा ।

देव दाखऊं सकळां ॥ २ ॥
चिंतनाच्या सुखें ।

तुका म्हणे नेणे दुःखें ॥ ३ ॥
नाहीं म्या वंचीला मंत्र कोणापाशी ।

राहिलों मानसीं धरुनी तो ॥ १ ॥
विटेवरी भावें ठेवीयेलें मन

पाउलें समान चिंतीतसे ॥ ध्रु ॥
पावविलों पार धरीला विश्वास ।

घालूनीया कास बळकट ॥ २ ॥
तुका म्हणे मागें पावले उद्धार ।

तीही हा आचार ठेविलासे ॥ ३ ॥

[Paranjape's Ed. of *Sri Tukobarayanche Abhanga* p. 47.]

"I do not know what *Mantra* is secretly given in the ears or what knowledge is imparted in secluded solitude. All of your saints! please hear me respectfully. I shall show you the Lord incarnate in His Fullness, whom you have not seen so far with your eyes. I am happy in His contemplation. Tuka says—I know not what is misery.

"I have my open *Mantra* of the Lord—Rama, Krishna, Hari—I have not snatched it away from any one. I have

constantly contemplated on it in my mind. I have thought of the feet of the Lord standing on the brick (Vithoba) with all devotion. With strong conviction and full faith I contemplate on those feet. In the past, Jnanesvar, Namdev and other saints were liberated in the same way—I am following their path and authority.”

14. SRINGERI

कटाक्षे दयाद्रां करे ज्ञानमुद्रां
कलाभिर्विनिद्रां कलापैः सुभद्राम् ।
पुरस्त्री विनिद्रां पुरस्तुङ्गभद्रां
भजे शारदाम्बामजसे मदम्बाम् ॥

—Sri Sankaracharya.

“I CONSTANTLY worship my Mother, the Saradambha,—Goddess of Learning—who is soft with compassion in her glances, who carries the *jnanamudra* in her hand, who is full-blown or expanded in all the digits of knowledge, who is blessed in her long-flowing hair, who is the waking and watchful presiding deity and in front of whom flows the river Tungabhadra”.

Sringeri is situated about 60 miles west of Birur in the Kadur District of Mysore on the left bank of river Tungabhadra. About 9 miles from this place is the hill called Sringa-giri or the Rishya--sringagiri of the Ramayana fame—and from which the name Sringeri is derived. It was the birth—place of Rishyasringa.

Sage Rishyasringa was the son of Sage Kasyapa Vibhandaka. The legend says that once while Sage Vibhandaka was having his river bath he saw the heavenly figure of Urvasi. The sage was moved. A female antelope had then come to drink water and along with water she took the sage's *virya* and gave birth to a manlike child with a horn, who later came to be known as Rishyasringa, i.e. having the horn of an antelope. The antelope who was a Devakanya with a curse died soon after giving birth to this child. The boy was brought up exclusively by his father Vibhandaka who imparted all knowledge to him.

Being born of an antelope, the boy was very shy and timid and never came in contact with anyone, particularly a female, till he attained manhood. Once during the reign of King Romapada of the Angas, there was a terrible drought and the population was in distress. The king was advised that if the pious Risyasringa came to his country, the rains would fall in plenty. Romapada thought out a plan to entice Rishasringa away from his father's hermitage. A damsel was entrusted with this work. She constructed a floating hermitage on a boat. Innocent Rishasringa took her to be a Muni-Kumar, went on the boat and was abducted to the country of Angas. On his very arrival, the heavens thundered and overflowed with plenty of rain to the utter amazement and satisfaction of Romapada. In gratitude the sage was married to Santa, the adopted daughter of Romapada and the natural daughter of King Dasaratha. The latter having no sons invited the sage to Ayodhya to officiate over the *Putrakameshti Yajna*. That having been done, Dasaratha had four sons, Rama and three others.

The story of Risyasringa is narrated in Vanaparva of *Mahabharata* and Balakanda of *Valmiki Ramayana*.

On this hill which is considered as the birth place of Risyasringa, there is a Saiva temple of Mallikarjuna. Tradition says that sage Vibandaka was absorbed in this Mallikarjuna-linga. Another tradition says that Risyasringa was absorbed in the Sringesvara-linga at Kigga, and that by worshipping this Sivalinga people never suffer from want of rains and never experience a drought.

The town close by this hill, called Sringeri, has since the 8th century A.D. become sacred on account of the famous and leading monastery of Sri Adya Sankaracharya, who established three other Maths at Dwaraka, Badari, and Jagannath Puri.

The great Advaita philosopher Sankaracharya (788 to 820 A.D.) was born on Vaisakha Sukla 5th at Kaladi in Malabar on the bank of river Poorna, the son of Sivaguru and Sri Ambika, being a Nambudri Brahmin of Black Yajus, Taittiriya Saka. His father died in his childhood. The mother brought him up and performed his sacred thread ceremony. Within a short time, he proved to be a prodigy and acquired all knowledge. He wanted to be a sannyasin but out of intense love and regard for his mother he could not become one. Once he was held by a crocodile in a river and his mother permitted him to take sannyasa with a hope that he might still survive even as a sannyasin. He promised to come to her at her death and perform her funeral rites which he did in spite of the opposition of local Nambudri Brahmins. He then went to the bank of Narmada to Govinda Yati, disciple of Gaudapada, and was initiated in Yoga and advaita philosophy. He came to Banaras and had his *digvijaya*. He composed *bhashyas* on Upanishads, Brahmasutras, Gita, Vishnusahasranama and numerous *stotras*. At Prayag, he met the great Mimamsaka Kumarila Bhatta who was about to give up his body by entering into fire. He therefore went as directed by Kumarila, to Mahishmati and defeated the famous Mimamsaka Mandanamirsa. He also expressed his readiness to answer delicate questions asked by Mandana's wife Bharati who presided over the debate. It is said that Sankara acquired this knowledge after entering the dead body of King Amaruka. Mandana became his pupil, and as sannyasin was known as Suresvara Acharya. Sankara's chief disciples were Padmapada, Hastamalaka, Trotaka, and Suresvara.

Then Sankara came to Sringeri on the bank of Tungabhadra and established his chief monastery. The reason why he selected Sringeri is explained in this way. Sankara

saw a cobra spreading out its hood like an umbrella over a pregnant frog in mid-sun, forgetting their natural enmity. This induced the great Sankara to select it as the site. It is said that Sankara was the incarnation of Siva, Mandana of Brahma, and Mandana's wife, Bharati, of Sarada. Sankara established at Sringeri Sarada's image with a Sri chakra in front of her, bound her down with Mantra, prayed her to remain there constantly and started the Bharati Sampradaya there for the propagation of the Advaitavada, reforming the *vamacharas* purging Hinduism of incoherent elements, defeating non-vedic faiths, co-ordinating the worship in the Panchayatana system and preaching the doctrine of ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः।

"Brahman alone is the Absolute Truth; the multiplicity of the world from the relative point of view of this Highest Truth is unreal, the Individual soul is Brahman and none else." He co-ordinated all Sruti-vakyas, on Saguna and Nirguna Brahman, by expounding the doctrine of Avidya or Maya and its Adhyasa or superimposition. He carried on similar work from Dwaraka, Badari and Puri Maths. He went even to Kashmir and received the highest honours and ovation. In Assam, one defeated Pandit practised black magic on him which though immediately averted by his powerful disciple, Padmapada, ultimately told upon the health of the desireless and indifferent Acharya. He came to Kedar and at the age of 32 or according to another view at the age of 38, this topmost and illustrious philosopher, saint, Bhakta, far-sighted organiser, and dynamic religious reformer finally entered a cave, never to return. Another tradition says he had his Samadhi at Kanchi.

Padmapada undertook to write a full commentary on Sankara's *Sutra-bhashya*. After completing it he went on the Ramesvara pilgrimage, leaving the manuscript with his Mimamsaka uncle. The latter destroyed it to the utter dis-

appointment of Padmapada. His *Panchapadika* and *Atma-bodha-Vyakhyana* alone have survived. He was in charge of the Dwaraka-Peeth according to tradition.

Suresvara was installed on the Sringeri Peeth. Tradition identifies him with Mandana and Visvarupa. Mandana is the author of *Brahma-Siddhi* in 4 chapters. As Suresvara, he is the author of *Naishkarmya-siddhi* and *Vartika* on the Brūhadaranyaka-Upanishad-Bhashya. Explaining Sankara's theory further Suresvara resorts to *Abhasa-vada*, Vachaspati to *Avach-cheda-vada*, and Sarvajnatmamuni (author of *Samkshepa Sariraka*) to the *Pratibimba-vada*.

After Suresvaracharya, this Sringeri Peeth has been occupied till now by an uninterrupted succession of learned Swamis. The present Swami, H. H. Sri Jagadguru Abinava Vidya Tirtha is the 35th in the line.

In the 14th century A.D. Sringeri saw one of the greatest Gurus on the Gadi, the profound Yogi and scholar, Swami Vidyasankar or Viridyatirtha, who was consecrated in 1228 A.D. and who had his Samadhi in 1333 A.D. i.e., who was the head for more than 100 years. After Vidyatirtha Swami, Bharatikrishnatirtha Swami became the head from 1328 to 1331 A.D. and was succeeded by another famous Guru, Vidyaranya Swami who was consecrated in 1331 A.D. and had his Samadi in 1386 A.D.

Vijaynagar city came into existence in 1336 A.D. Tradition says that Hakka and Bukka, officers of Pratapa Rudra, ruler of Tailangana, came to Swami Vidyaranya, sought his divine help and on Magha Sukla 7th Saka 1258, Thursday, in the midday's Abhijin-muhurta, established the city of Vijaynagar. Bukka was appointed king.

Vidyaranya who was then at Banaras was specially invited to help in founding the Vijaynagar kingdom and to take charge of the Sringeri Math. The Vijaynagar

rulers, needless to say, paid special homage to Vidyatirth, Bharatitirtha, and Vidyaranya and made several grants to the Math.

The pious Vidyatirtha Swami gave up his body according to tradition, in a special way. He practised the *Lambika Yoga* and entered an underground cellar which was to be opened after 12 years. It was promised that in 12 years his body, by occult powers, would become a Sivalinga; but curious people opened the pit in 3 years and found only a linga in formation.

Vidyaranya is usually identified with Madhava. Madhava was the son of Mayana and Srimati, of Bharadwaja Gotra, black Yajus, Baudhayana Sutra and the minister of Bukka. He and Sayana are sometimes identified, while others describe them as brothers. As Madhava, he is credited with having composed Bhashyas on 4 Vedas, on the Brahmanas of 4 Vedas, commentary on *Parasara Smriti*, *Jaininiyanyayamalavistara*, *Sarvadarsanasangraha*, etc. and as Vidyaranya he composed *Vivarana-prameyasangraha*, *Jivamuktiviveka*, and *Panchadasi*. Madhava is a great polymath and has written on almost all branches of knowledge and has done immense service to Sanskrit literature, Dharmasastra and philosophy. Some scholars do not accept these identifications of persons. Dr. Kane has pointed out that *Viramitrodaya* treats Madhava and Vidyaranya as one. Vidyaranya appears to have three Gurus, Vidyatirtha, Bharatitirtha and Sankarananda.

In sacred memory of his Guru Vidyasankar or Vidyatirtha, Vidyaranya had built through the Vijaynagar ruler the extant and famous Vidyasankar temple of Siva at Sringeri. He also installed a golden image of Sarada in place of the sandalwood image installed by the Adi Guru Sankara. Successive rulers paid homage to and donated

villages for the up-keep of the math and the temple which is unique in construction being apsidal at both ends. The doorways have fine dwarapalakas and the outer walls show various animal figures and puranic scenes. Among the other temples at Sringeri is that of Janardana and there in a niche is a stone-figure of Sankaracharya 1½ feet high. There are also figures of Vyasa and Brahma with labels giving their names.

Jewels of Goddess Sarada are very costly; there are ruby figures of Venugopal and Srinivas, Nandi of a large single pearl and several other precious articles of worship.

Sringeri records have numerous grants and communications from various rulers. There are about 20 inscriptions of the Vijaynagar period. One grant of Harihara II records the death of Vidyaranya. There is a letter dated 1800 A.D. addressed by Peshwa Baji Rao Ballal, Pradhan, to the then Guru Sachchidananda Bharati Swami (1770 to 1814 A.D.) conveying the decision of the Peshwa to pay Agra-Puja or first honours to Sringeri Math in all the assemblies that met for religious purposes and requesting the Swami to send his representatives to Poona and other places to receive that Puja.

There are three respectful communications of Hyder to the Sringeri Math. In one of them Hyder says that as Raghunath Rao Peshwa had desired the then Swami to visit his place, Nabab Hyder Ali Khan Bahadur had sanctioned 10½ thousand Rupees for journey expenses of the Swami and an elephant, five horses, a palanquin and five camels, with gold cloth for the Goddess, five silk pieces for standards and a pair of shawls.

There are about 30 records of Tippu. Some brigands had looted the Sringeri Math and displaced the Goddess Sarada. Angry Tippu reverentially writes to the then Swami "People who have sinned against such a holy place

are sure to suffer the consequences of their misdeeds at no distant date in this Kali age in accordance with the verse:

हसद्भिः क्रियते कर्म हृदिभिरनुभूयते ।

"people do evil deeds smiling but will suffer the consequences weeping." (Mysore Archaeological Department Annual Report, 1916, p. 74).

Tippu repeatedly requested the Sringeri Guru to offer prayers to the God and to send his holy blessings so that there might be peace in the country and his armies might be victorious. In one of the letters he expresses great pleasure at the *Sahasrachandijapa* performed under the Swami's guidance for the welfare of the country; so he ordered his men to supply to him all necessary material for the performance of religious rites according to Sastras, making money gifts to the Brahmins engaged and feeding 1000 Brahmins a day for 40 days, and as stated in a subsequent letter Tippu says that the Japa was really very effective. When Sringeri Guru had been out on a tour Tippu wrote to him "In whatever country holy personages like yourself may reside, that country will flourish with good showers and crops. Why should you live so long in a foreign country? Please finish your work soon and return." (Mysore Arch. Dept. A.R. 1916, p. 75).

H. H. Sambhu Chhatrapati, the peshwas and other Maratha States like Scindia, Holkar, and others, also paid homage and respect to the Sringeri Gurus who have been venerated by a very large population of South India and the Maratha country as great spiritual guides whose influence has been far-reaching in the whole of India.

The great spiritual organisation established by Sri Sankara has made a cultural conquest of the country without an army and has stood the test of time and gained veneration, respect, help and patronage even from Sultans like

Hyder and Tippu. Sringeri had a line of highly philosophical saintly and scholarly Swamis succeeding to the Peeth, and the farsighted organising ability of the Adi Guru Sankara proves itself to be colossal and amazing.

Sri Sankara was not only a philosopher expounding a dry Maya-vada but a great Bhakta as well. When he had the Darsana of Lord Visvesvara at Kasi, he prayed :

यात्रा मया सर्वमता हता ते
ध्यानेन चेतःपरता हता ते ।
स्तुत्याऽनया वाक्परता हता ते
क्षन्तव्यमेतत् त्रयमेव शम्भो ! ॥

"In having your Darsana here in Kasi, Oh Siva! I have committed three great sins. One is to have Your Yatra, the other is to have Your thought, the third is to pray to You—by having the Yatra I have sinned in imagining the Omnipresent as limited in space to Kasi only ; in thinking about and praying You, I have sinned in imagining that the Infinite can be grasped by the finite mind and speech. Kindly forgive my said three sins."

He thus prays to Vishnu :

सत्यपि भेदापगमे !
नाथ तवाहं न मामक्रीनस्वम् ।
सामुद्रो हि तरङ्गः
क्वचन समुद्रो न तारङ्गः ।

"O Lord! even after realising that there is no real difference between Jiva and Brahman, I beg to state that I am Yours and not that You are mine. The wave belongs to the ocean, not the ocean to the wave."

15. AMBIKA OF ARASUR

देव्या यया ततमिदं जगदात्मशक्त्या
निःशेषदेवगणशक्तिसमूहमूर्त्या ।
तामम्बिकांमखिलदेवमहर्षिपूज्या
भक्त्या नत्ताःस्म विदधतु शुभानि सा नः ॥

—*Markandeya Purana,*

Sakradi Stuti.

“We bow with devotion to Ambika the Goddess who has created the universe with her Atmic power, who is the embodiment of the collective energy of all Gods put together, and who is worshipped by Gods and sages one and all—may she shower her graces on us.”

THE celebrated shrine of Ambika is situated on the Arasur Hills near Mount Abu (Arbuda) to the south-west end of the Aravali range in the north of Gujarat. It is near the source of the river Saraswati which flows from this place, passes by the town of Sidhpur, and disappears in the desert of Kutch. Near the source of Saraswati is the temple of Kotesvara Mahadev. It is a famous place of pilgrimage visited by lacs of people every year.

According to *Puranas*, the river Saraswati is described as flowing in three parts. The first at her source in Plaksha Prasravana in Siwalik range of Himalayas and disappearing at Vinasana near Kurukshetra; the second when she rises near Mount Abu on the Arasur Hills by the side of the temple of Kotesvara Mahadev, goes past Sidhpur and disappears in the desert of Kutch. The third is when she rises in the jungles of Gir in Saurashtra and meets the western sea near Prabhas Patan.

In *Rigveda*, the river appears to be a mighty one

rising from the Himalayas and meeting the western sea, but the Brahmanas note the disappearance of Saraswati near Vinasana and the *Puranas* describe her in three parts as stated above. This phenomenon is explained as due to volcanic eruptions.

The presence of Saraswati near Mount Abu and collecting at this place of Ganga and other *Tirthas* on account of the fear of the Kali age are recorded in *Skanda Purana* (Prabhasa-Khanda, Arbuda-Sub-Khanda, ch 10)

तेषां वासश्च संजातः पर्वतेऽर्बुदसङ्गहे ।

एवं तत्र समापन्ना गंगा चैव सरस्वती ॥

Saraswati is treated as one river from Himalayas to Prabhasa with her above-stated three parts also in *Mahabharata* (Salya Parva), *Padma Purana* (Srishti) and *Saraswati Purana*.

Saraswati Purana (ch. 9) records a story of Krishna coming to Sage Tandu at this place (Arasur) and asking him questions about obtaining a son. The sage gave him an *asana* or sea and so the area is known as Arasana. Tradition also says that the tonsure ceremony of Krishna was performed here (Bom. Gaz. Vol. 5, p. 432). The spot is pointed out on the Gabbar hill about three miles from Ambika Temple.

Bhagavata (X-34-1, 2) says:

एकदा देवयात्रायां गोपाला जातकौतुकाः ।

अनोभिरनङ्गदयुक्तैः प्रययुस्तेऽम्बिकावनम् ॥

तत्र स्नात्वा सरस्वत्यां देवं पशुपतिं विभुम् ।

जानन्तुरर्हणैर्मक्त्वा देवीं च नृपतेऽम्बिकाम् ॥

"Krishna came in a bullock cart with Gopas to Ambikavana for a pilgrimage and sight-seeing, had a bath in the Saraswati and worshipped Siva and Goddess Ambika". In this forest a serpent troubled Nanda, and Krishna liberated him.

It is further stated that when Krishna carried Rukmini away at her request, when she was about to be married to Sisupala, Rukmani worshipped the Goddess Ambika here. This legend is recorded in the *Anand Garba* of Vallabh Dholā (1640 to 1751 A.D.)

नृप भीमकनी कुमारी तम पूजे पामी मा ।

रुक्मिणी रमण मुरारि मनगमतो स्वामी मा ।

"Rukmini, daughter of King Bhima, worshipped you and thereby secured Krishna, the husband of her choice."

Bhagavata refers to Rukmini's Ambika worship in X-53.

The Aravali range of mountains of which Abu or Arbuda is a part is considered very ancient and much older than the Himalayas. Worship of Pasupati and Mother Goddess is as old as and even older than the Indus Valley Civilization. Mother Goddess has been worshipped in India since time immemorial and every village worships her as Mata, Amba, Gramadevata, Kali and under myriad other names. In the *Rigveda* also she is Ushas, Prithivi, Rivers, Sraddha, Aditi, Vac, etc. *Kena Upanishad* specifically mentions Uma Haimavati.

Mount Abu or Arbuda is famous on account of the hermitage of Sage Vasishtha. The sage's cow Nandini is said to have fallen in a pit here. The sage then contemplated on the river Saraswati; the river Goddess was pleased; she came down, filled the pit with water, and enabled the cow to get out.

On and around Abu, the *Skanda* (Arbuda Khanda) describes the various *Tirthas* like Vaisishthasram, Saraswati Sangam, Katyayani, Achalesvara, Kotisvara, Srimata, Kotitirtha, etc. As most of them are very vaguely described, it is difficult to identify all of them. Whether Ambika and Kotesvara of Arasur are included in these vague allusions it is difficult to say.

Tirihakalpataru p. 237 and *Viramitrodaya Tirtha-prakasa*, p. 605 quoting *Vamana*, mention the Kotitirtha on the bank of Saraswati which appears to be the same Kotitirtha mentioned in Arbuda Khanda of *Skanda* or the Kotesvara of Arásur on the source of Saraswati.

There are two manuscripts of Ambika Khanda of *Skanda Purana* noted by Egging in the India Office Catalogue VI (p. 1321) and also by MM. Hara Prasad Shastri in the Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. V, Nos. 3921-22. This Ambika Khanda has 12,000 verses.

In the Ambika temple at Arasur there is no image of the Goddess—there is only a *Yantra* and with the help of dress and other equipment, an appearance of an image is made out for Darsana. The Goddess is Durga, the consort of Siva, the daughter of Himalaya and Mena. As Baalaa at Chunval in North Gujarat, she is a Kanya, at Arasur she is the consort of Siva and the affectionate mother, and at Pavagadh near Champaner, she is Bhadrakali, the liberator.

In the Arasur temple there are several inscriptions of the 16th century A.D., one being a record of the grant made by the Queen of Rao Bharmall. On Mansarovar there is an inscription of Maharana Maldev of 1359 A.D. Of the nearly 360 Jain marble temples at Kumbharia only five remain intact. The legend is that as Vimalshah did not acknowledge the grace of Goddess Ambika, she burnt 355 out of 360 temples and left only five in tact. Vimalshah then prayed to the Goddess Ambika when he built the Delwara temple of Adinath on Mount Abu in 1032 A.D. In Kumbaria there is an inscription of 1200 A.D. of Dhara-varshadev, ruler of Arbuda, recording that he had built a *Vav* in Arasur. *Rajkalanirnaya* mentions Raopalji as ruling in Nagarthaththa in 809 A.D. and his 15th descendant

Jasraj having shifted to Gujarat and established his capital at Gabbargadh. (Ranchodbhai's Translation of *Ras-mala* p. 249). It is also recorded that when the city of Valabhi fell in 746 A.D. queen Puspavati of King Siladitya of Valabhi was on a pilgrimage of Ambika (Bom. Gaz. V, p. 443). These records of the Ambika Temple of Arasur date back to a period prior to the 8th Century A.D.

Devi Bhagavata 7-30 records the legend that Daksha once performed a *Yajna*, and invited there all Gods and sages except Sankara. Sati, Daksa's daughter and Sankara's consort, came to the *Yajna*, felt insulted and burnt herself in the sacrificial fire. Sankara came to know about it, was terribly upset and in delirium started a destructive Tandava with the half-burnt body of Sati on his shoulders. All were terrified; to save the universe and dissuade Sankara from his resolve, Vishnu with the help of his bow-end, or according to another version, of his *Chakra*, cut the dead body of Sati into pieces; all such pieces of Sakti's body fell at different places and became pieces of stone. When Sankara was pacified all those places then became the sacred Peethas of the Sakti. *Kalikapurana* Ch. 18, records a similar story.

These Saktipeethas are variously described as 52, 72 or 108 in number and the places or the various parts of Sakti's body falling at such spots are differently described in *Devigita*, *Devibhagavata*, *Kalikapurana*, *Tantrachudamani*, etc. It is recorded that the breasts of Sakti fell at Jalandhara जालन्धरे स्तनयुग्म् । (*Kalika* 18-43). Another version says:

आरासनेऽर्द्धदाङ्गे तु क्षेत्रे जालन्धरे तथा ।
क्रमशः पतितौ तस्याः कुचौ तु वामदक्षिणौ ।

"In Arasan (Arasur) which is a part of Mount Abu and at Jalandhar respectively fell the left and right breasts of the Sakti."

This shows that the Peetha of Arasur Ambika in one of those ancient and sacred Peethas recognised by ancient tradition.

The worship of Sakti has been very closely associated with that of Siva. The principal places of Siva worship in Gujarat were at Somnath and on Narbaba banks. Soma is *Sa* plus *Uma*, i.e. Siva along with his consort Uma. Gujarat is considered as the birth place of the Pasupata cult of Lakulisa who was born at Kayavaroha (Karvan) in the Lata country in about the 2nd century A.D. and who established his Pasupata Math at Somnath. From about the 10th to the 14th century A.D., Gujarat was the stronghold of the Saiva and Pasupata cults. Numerous learned Acharyas flourished during that time. Many of the Kshatrapa, Valabhi and Solanki rulers were Saivas and the Solankis described themselves as

उमापतिवरलब्धप्रसाद.

Ambika worship was specially in vogue during the Valabhi period as is evidenced by the record that when Valabhi fell in 746 A.D. Siladitya's Queen Puspavati was on the *Yatra* of Ambika. The temple of Arasur was situated in the Danta territory and was closely connected with Nagar Brahmins who were then in political ascendance. It is said that the present temple was built by them (Bom. Gaz. V, 433). These Brahmins take out special Sanghas in Sravan and Bhadrapad, the latter being the birth-month of the Goddess; and their claim for prior worship has long been recognised. Garbas are held in the *chachar* or outer open space in front of the temple. The marbles on the steps and the floorings are worn out, hollowed and smoothened and so prove the antiquity of the place.

Devi Bhagavata mentions several Sakti Peethas in Gujarat—at Dwaravati, Somesvara, Prabhasa, Saraswati and Samudra Tira. *Saraswati Purana* says that Siddha-

raja Jaysinha established 1000 Sivalingas around the Sahasralinga lake which filled with water of river Sarasvati and also established 108 temples of Sakti representing the 108 Peethas with Goddess Harsiddha in the centre (Ch. 16, verses 136 ff). There is a reference to the worship of Goddess Kshemarya in an inscription dated 625 A.D. of Pindwara near Sirohi.

At present the three main Peethas of Sakti in Gujarat are of Ambika at Arasur, of Bala (Bahuchara) in Chunval in north Gujarat and of Kalirat Pavagadh near Champaner. There are other places also—Asapura in Kutch, Harsiddhi at Kolgiri or Koyla, Sundari in Halvad, Arbuda-devi on Mount Abu, Anasuya on Narmada and others

Pavakachal Mahatmya is a part of *Skanda*. Shri Narmadasankar Mehta notes that the shape of the Pavagadh hill is like the *yantra* of Kalika. (Sakta Sampradaya p. 108.) Regarding Bala Bahuchara, there is a reference in *Shrimad Bhagavata* X-4-12 stating that Yogamaya when she was about to be dashed to the ground by Kamsa disappeared and was thereafter known by the name of Goddess Bahu, i.e. Bahuchara.

In Gujarat, the main aspects of the Sakti which are worshipped are of Srikula—Ambika, Lalita, Bala, Tulja and others. Kali in Gujarat is of Dakshina Achara and is not the fierce Kalika but is known as Bhadrakali. When Sankaracharya established four *maths* at Dwarka, Badari, Puri and Sringeri, the four presiding Goddesses were respectively Bhadrakali, Poornagiri, Visala and Sarada. Bhadrakali is not associated with fierce or Vamachara practices.

Many people even now have the tonsure ceremony of their children performed following the traditional practice of Krishna, at the shrine of Arasur. The devotees of Ambika include not only Hindus and Jains, but even Parsis

and Muslims. Many take a vow to visit the Arasur shrine and *vrata* to do something if their desires are fulfilled and the faithful have their desires fulfilled.

There are four *Sanghas* in a year in Kartik, Margasirsha, Sravan and Bhadrapad. After the morning Daršana upto 12 noon, there is a spectacular Arati (waving of lights) in the evening with chanting of prayers from the Durga Saptasati and the ringing of numerous bells and drums. Use of ghee alone is enforced in the temple and its vicinity and celibacy is strictly observed. Any kind of impurity is said to enrage the Goddess.

About 3 miles from this shrine is the hill of Gabbar in the inner chambers of which the mother Goddess is said to be seated on a swing. Once a cowherd boy while tending cows is said to have found a cow of the Goddess mixed up in his own herd for a few days; he then went after that cow to locate her owner, came to this hill chamber of the Goddess, demanded his remuneration and was given some Yavas (Barley) for his having tended the cow; in disappointment he threw them away; a few had yet stuck to the cloth in which he received them; on returning home he found that they were made of gold and was again disappointed. On a fresh search he found neither the cow nor her owner.

The sword in the hand of the Goddess is said to have been presented by Rana Pratap. Once he resolved to see his Idar Rani; Akbar came to know of that and besieged Idargadh; Pratap had wind of it but was determined to see the Rani. He started on a rainy night but his horse got held up in flooded river. Pratap prayed to the Mother and pledged to place his sword before the feet of Goddess Ambika if he succeeded in carrying out his resolve. In spite of strict vigilance of the Moghul army, Pratap went in the Idargadh, saw the Rani, came back unhurt and there

lies the same sword, says tradition, placed by the Rāna at the feet of Ambika in token of his devotion and surrender.

Among those in Gujarat who have written on the greatness of the Goddess, Poet Somesvaradeva (1179 to 1262 A.D.) is the most outstanding. He was a Nagar Brahmin of Anandpur or Vadnagar, son of Kumar and Laksmi, and was the Rajya Purohit of Solanki rulers. This eminent poet is the author of several Sanskrit works like *Surathotsava*, *Kirti Kaumudi*, *Kavya-prakasha-tika*, *Kavyadarsa*, *Rama-sataka* and *Ullagha-raghava*. In the 15th chapter of his *Surathotsava* he has given his life in detail. In *Kirti Kaumudi*, he has praised the liberality of his patrons Vastupal and Tejpal. His style is flowing, simple and elegant. In *Surathotsava* he depicts the story of King Suratha on the same lines as in the *Markandeya Purana*—how king Suratha was deprived of his kingdom, how he heard about the greatness of Devi who had killed Dhumralochana, Sumba and others, how Suratha performed penance, worshipped the Devi, pleased her, and regained his kingdom with Her grace.

The last verse says:

कुमारपुत्रेण कुमारमातुः
काव्यं तदेतज्जगदेकदेव्याः ।
श्रुतिस्मृतिव्याकृतियज्ञविद्या—
विशारदेन क्रियते स्म तेन ॥

“ This *Mahakavya* has been composed by (Somesvara-deva) the son of Kumara, who is adept in Vedas, Smriti's, grammar and rituals, in praise of the Mother of Kumara or Kārtikeya (Ambika) who is the one Mother Goddess of the entire universe.”

Vallabh Dhola (1640 to 1751 A.D.) is another outstanding author who has composed numerous *garbas* on the Mother-Goddess. He lived for more than 110 years. He had little education but it is said that on account of the

siddhi of the *Navarna Mantra* he acquired great poetic abilities.

The famous *tantric* authority of the 17th century, Bhaskara Raya, also called Bhasuranandanatha, who was the author of *Lalitasahasranamabhashya*, *Varivasya rahasya*, *Setubandha* and about 15 other works, had his *Diksha* through his worthy and earned Guru Sivadatta Sukla of Surat, Cf.

यश्च श्रीशिवदत्तशुक्लचरणैः पूर्णाम्बिकतोऽभवत् ॥ ल. स. भा.

The *Navaratras* of Asvin and Chaira, the full-moon and new-moon days and the Ashtami are specially sacred to the Goddess. Establishing *Kumbhas*, growing *Javaras*, performing *Bhavais*, and singing *Garbas*, are the special features of *Navaratras*. Asvin *Navatra* and the Sarad Poornima are famous for the melodious *garba* dances sung all over Gujarat and in Bombay by ladies in gay colourful dress in praise of the Goddess when a lamp is placed in a painted and perforated earthen jar and ladies sing in a circle moving around it.

Poet Somesvaradeva describes the realisation of King Suratha, after his penance, in these words : —

मुदितेन तेन मुनिना निवेदितं यदचिन्तयच्चिरमनन्यमानसः ।

पुरतः स्फुरन्निरुपमं महन्महत् तदवेक्ष्य स क्षितिपतिर्विसिस्मिये ॥

भुवनैकमातरमवेहि वत्स ! मां मुदितामनेन महता व्रतेन ते ।

तदलं वरं वद यदर्थमर्थिता भवताऽहमित्यभिप्रेये तमद्भिभूः ॥

Surathotsava Ch. 14, 2-3.

(Kavyamala Series, Bombay).

“King Suratha contemplated for long upon the deity without thinking of anything else, and as directed by the sage whose mind was filled with delight. Having visualised the same great and unequalled lustre throbbing in front of him, the king was struck with wonder.

The daughter of Himalaya then said to him: "Know Me, O Vatsa ! as the One Mother of the entire universe. I am pleased with this thy great penance. Now speak out why thou hast sought me and my abundant grace is for thee for the mere asking."

16. SRIRANGAM

अन्तर्ज्योतिः किमपि यमिनामञ्जनं योगदृष्टेश्च
चिन्तारत्नं सुलभमिह नः सिद्धिमोक्षानुरूपम् ।
दीनानाथव्यसनशमनं दैवतं दैवतानां
दिव्यं चक्षुः श्रुतिपरिषदां दृश्यते रङ्गमध्ये ।

“Sri Ranganatha is the Inner Light of those who practise self-control, the unguent which gives the Yogic sight, the easily obtainable ‘chintamani’ jewel yielding all ‘siddhis’ and even liberation, the remover of the troubles of the poor and the helpless, the God of Gods, the divine light. He is seen as seated on the central stage in the assembly of the srutis.”

—Sri Venkatacharya.

BETWEEN the two branches of river Kaveri is the island of Srirangam about three miles north of the town of Trichinopoly. It contains the celebrated Vaishnava Shrine of Lord Sri Ranganatha of great repute and antiquity. Sri Ranganatha is lying recumbent on the great serpent Adishesha, and near His feet are seated His two consorts Sri Bhu and Sri Neela.

The legend is that Sri Ranganatha was first worshipped in heaven by Brahma. It was then brought by King Ikshvaku to his capital at Ayodya. He and his descendants regularly carried on His worship generation after generation—as a family deity. In course of time it came to Sri Rama as paternal inheritance. After Sri Rama returned from Lanka and was crowned, his ally Vibhishana who had been to Ayodhya wished to go back to Lanka. At his special request, Sri Rama gave him the image of Sri Ranganatha, the family deity of the Ikshvaku. Vibhishana

carried it south to reach Lanka but the condition was that he was not to place it on the ground. Vibhishana could not fulfil the condition and placed the image at Srirangam from whence he could not subsequently remove it. Since then, the legend says, Sri Ranganatha has stayed at Srirangam.

River Kaveri divides into two rivers about five miles from Srirangam, the northern tributary being called Coleeroon and the southern, Kaveri. After about 12 miles from Srirangam, the two branches meet again. A bath in Kaveri is considered highly beneficial, particularly when the Sun and Jupiter are in Libra.

From Pausa Sukla 1st to 11th there is a great festival here of Vaikuntha Ekadasi. As a matter of fact on all the 24 Ekadasis (11th day in each lunar fortnight) of the year, there are special *Puja* celebrations. *Padma* (Uttara 38) records a legend that the demon Mura, son of Tala-jangha, started causing trouble to everyone, including Vishnu. Feeling harassed, Vishnu went to Badari in the Himalayas and slept in a cave called Simhavati, asking his Yogamaya to guard the entrance. Mura followed him. Yogamaya then created the Ekadasi Devi who killed Mura. Vishnu on waking was pleased with her work, and gave her the ability to destroy the sins of all who observed her day ---the Ekadasi, which is observed even till this day with a fast by all sections of the community, particularly by the Vaishnavas.

The temple is situated on a spacious plot in the island and is one of the biggest temples with numerous Prakarams, Gopurams, and gates. The Vimana of the Lord has the shape of Omkar. Devotees bathe in Kaveri and the Chandrapushkarani lake and then have the *darsana* of Sri Ranganatha with four hands reposing on the big serpent. Nearby are the images of Nathamuni, Yamunacharya, and Ramanujacharya. On one of the Gopurams is the image of

Vedantadesika. The management and *Pooja* of the temple are according to the Ramanuja Sampradaya.

The Alvars were the most ancient Vaishnava saints of South India which according to *Bhagavata* was a great centre of the Bhaktimarga (XI. 5. 38 ff).

They are twelve in number. The following verse mentions them together.

भूतं सरस्व-महदाह्वय-भट्टनाथ-श्रीभक्तिसार-कुलशेखर-योगिवाहान् ।
मवतांघ्रिरेणु-परकाल-यतोन्द्रमिश्रान् श्रीमत्पराङ्कुशमुनिं प्रणुतोऽस्मि
नित्यम् ।

Tradition gives them a very ancient date, about 4203 B.C. for the earliest. The Modern view is to place them from the 6th to 9th centuries A.D. Andal, the adopted daughter of Periyalvar, and Madhurakavi, the disciple of Nammalwar (Sathakopa Muni) are also considered as Alvars. They were God-intoxicated, having His intuitive knowledge and the deep and delicate Bhakti. Their writings are collected in the *Nalayiraprabandham*. Liberation is the condition of being a permanent servant (Kainkarya) of God. Alvars represent the emotional and ecstatic side of Vaishnavism while the Acharyas who succeeded them represent the philosophical and intellectual side.

Sankara's date is almost certainly fixed and he most probably lived from 788 to 820 A.D. for a short period of 32 years. Ramanuja who himself was influenced by Alvars and his predecessors Acharyas, in his turn greatly influenced the later scholars. He lived a long life extending upto 120 years and flourished from 1017 to 1137 A.D. Madhva (1199 to 1278 A.D.) is believed to have lived for 79 years; according to another view, for 69 years (1118 to 1189 A.D.). Vallabha (1449 to 1531 A.D.) lived for 52 years. Both from the point of view of date and in the matter of influence, Ramanuja was the first to come after Sankara.

Sankara in his Bhashyas does not mention any prede-

cessors while Ramanuja has mentioned as his predecessors the Vrittikara Bodhayana, the Bhashyakara Dramida and the Vakyakara Tanka. Sankara mentions one Vrittiikara of Vishnuite leanings without naming him, differing from him practically on all the points where quoted.

Mahapurna (Nambi) was the disciple of Yamunacharya. One of Nambi's sisters, Kantimati, was married to Kesava Yajvan. Ramanuja, son of Kesava and Kantimati, was born in 1017 A.D. He received instructions along with his mother's sister's son Govindara Bhatta from Yadavaprakasa, follower of the Sankara School of Vedantic thought.

Yamunacharya, otherwise called Alavandar, was the son of Isvaramuni and the grandson of Nathmuni and he lived from 918 to 1038 A.D. Ramanuja was the great grandson of Alavandar through one of his grand-daughters.

Ramanuja married at the age of 16. He came to Kanchi to study under Yadavaprakasa. It is said that Ramanuja successfully cured the daughter of the chief of this place who was possessed by a spirit, a feat which his teacher Yadavaprakasa could not do. Added to this, there were several differences of opinion in the matter of the interpretation of certain texts between Ramanuja and his teacher Yadavaprakasa. Ramanuja did not like the negative interpretation of सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म. The निर्गुणत्व of ब्रह्म he interpreted as हेयगुण वर्जितत्व. He interpreted कामs in सोऽश्नुते सर्वान् कामान् as the कल्याण-गुणs of the Lord and was disgusted with Yadava's interpretation of कल्याणपुण्डरीक. Ultimately Ramanuja left him.

Just as Sankara is taken to be an Avatara of Siva, Ramanuja is taken to be an Avatara of Lakshmana or Sesa. Yamunacharya or Alavandar wanted to hand over his teachings to Ramanuja just before his death but he expired before Ramanuja could arrive to meet him at Sriran-

gam. It is said that three closed fingers of Alavandar's dead body opened one after the other when Ramanuja took three vows of writing a Bhashya on the *Brahmasutras*, and immortalising the names of Sathakopa and Parasara. It is said that Lord Varadaraja answered 6 questions of Ramanuja thus:—Vishnu is the highest truth; even after the realisation there is a difference between the Antaryamin Isvara and His two-fold body the Chit and the Achit; Pra-patti is the best means; God Himself comes to the devotee at the time of death and there is no need to worry about remembering Him at the time of death, there is no Jivan-Mukti; and that Ramanuja must have the association of Sage Mahapurna.

Ramanuja was not very happy domestically. His wife quarreled over small trifles and once even insulted Sage Mahapurna. Ramanuja ultimately became a sannyasin.

With the help of his pupil Kuresa, Ramanuja secured the Bodhayana Vritti from Kasmir. The owner would not part with it, so Kuresa daily committed to memory the portion he read and copied the same at night. Ramanuja wrote his Bhashya on *Brahmasutras* following this Vritti. It is said that he placed it before Saraswati who approved of it and therefore it is called Sribhashya.

Ramanuja defeated Yajnamurti, one Sankarite, in Srirangam. Ramanuja wrote *Sribhashya*, *Vedantasara*, *Vedantadeepa*, *Gitabhashya*, *Gadyatraya*, *Vedartha-Sangraha*, and *Bhagvad-aradhana-krama*. It is said that his former teacher Yadavaprakasa became his pupil. Ultimately Ramanuja decided to stay at Srirangam and dedicate his life to the worship of Sri Ranganatha.

Kulottunga I, a Saivite king, persecuted Mahapurna and Kuresa and Ramanuja then came down to the Hoysala country. There he converted the Jain King Bittideva who

became a Vaishnava, renamed as Vishnu-Vardhanadeva. It was only on Kulottunga's death in 1117 A D. that Ramanuja once again came back to Srirangam.

Ramanuja's special contribution is his doctrine of co-ordination of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti; they are to be gone through in the order stated. Bhakti overrides Jnana. In this Sri or Visishta advaita samprādaya it is held that the weapons and the Parsadas of the Lord are born in human forms. Sathakopa Alwar was the Avatara of Vishvakṣena and he handed over his Sahasragithi and the Divyaprabandha of other Alwars to Ramanuja's predecessor Nathamuni.

Against the Kevaladvaita of Sankara, the attack was led by Ramanuj with his Visishtadvaita, Madhva with his Dvaita and Vallabha with his Suddhadvaita. In *Sri-bhashya* on 1-1-1, Ramanuja mentions seven Anupapattis or defects in the doctrine of Avidyā or Mayavada. Leading philosophers of the Sankara school have also replied to these arguments.

Ramanuja ruled over 74 episcopal Maths and had numerous scholars as his followers and disciples. He travelled widely and also established Maths at Banaras and Puri. Vanamamalai Math is one of the most important Maths.

Srivaishnavas were divided into two sects, the Vadalai Srivaishnavas and the Tengalai Srivaishnavas. The first point of difference is whether the grace of God (Swami Kripa) is spontaneous (Nirhetuka) or can be had only after an effort on the part of the devotee (Sahetuka). The former view was held by Tengalais and the latter by Vadagalais. This led to the difference in the conception of Bhakti—whether it should be of the Markata (monkey) or the Marjara (cat) type. A young one of the monkey,

apart from relying on its mother also makes its own efforts. The young one of a cat completely relies on its mother.

In the time of Ramanuja, the differences were not very marked between the Tengalai School of the Alvars and the Vadagalai School. Even Ramanuja says that the main principle is *Prapatti or Self-Surrender*, a prayerful approach to the Lord, believing Him with *utmost faith* to be the *only Sarana* and further believing that there is no *other upaya* or means. These two sects also developed minor differences in the marks on the forehead etc. The leader of the Vadagalai sect was Venkatanatha and of the Tengalai sect was Pillai Lokacharya. Later, Saumya Jamatri muni became the leader of the Tengalai sect. These leaders were imbued with great spiritualism and were in sympathy with each other but the followers made the minor points a bone of great contention.

During the lifetime of Venkatanath, Malik Kafur invaded the south in 1310 A.D. Srirangam was attacked in 1326 A.D. and the temple-keepers removed the image of Sri Ranganatha to Tirupati. When the Vijayanagar kingdom was established, Sri Ranganatha was again restored to Srirangam.

Venkatanath, also called the Vedantadesika, Vedantacharya and Kavitarikikasimha, is one of the biggest names in the school of Visishtadvaita. He was born in Kanchi in 1268 A.D. Both Venkatanath and the great Kevaladvaitin Vidyaranya Swami were co-students and great friends of each other. The former was a householder while the latter became a sannyasin in later age. On account of his deep friendship, Vidyaranya as a minister of Vijaynagar invited Venkatanath for being honoured by the King but Venkatanath declined to accept the Royal honours and preferred to lead a stern poor life of an ascetic.

He lived in a pure and straightforward manner, was sympathetic to one and all and was in turn revered by every section of society. He was the author of numerous works on a variety of subjects and was a very gifted poet. Between Venkatanath and Vidyaranya working in co-operation, one working for Vaishnavism and the other for Sainism, they succeeded in stemming other influences at the most critical period and helped to save and regenerate the Hindu faith. Venkatanath was called the Ghanta or the bell of the Lord. He wrote *Padhukasahasram* in 1000 verses in praise of Sri Ranganatha. His other famous poetical works are *Yadavabhyudaya*, *Hamsa-sandesa* and *Sankalpasuryodaya*. In all he is said to have written 120 works in Sanskrit and Tamil.

The temple of Sri Ranganatha was supported by practically all the dynasties of South India—the Pallavas, the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Hoysalas, the Rulers of Vijayanagar and their subordinate chieftains. All the Alvars have sung in praise of Sri Ranganatha. Kulasekhara Alvar, the ruler of Kerala, wrote his famous *Mukuudamala* in praise of Lord at Srirangam.

भवजलधिगतानां द्वन्द्ववाताहतानां
सुतदुहितृकलत्राणभारार्दितानाम् ।
विषमविषयतोये मज्जतामप्लवानां
भवति शरणमेको विष्णुपोतो नराणाम् ॥

“Vishnu is the only boat and shelter of people thrown in the ocean of life, afflicted by the winds of opposing conflicts, burdened with anxieties of family life and getting helplessly drowned in the turbulent waters of material objects.”

—*Mukundamala*.

Ramanuja in his *Gadya-traya* says: —

अपारकरुणाम्बुधे ! अनालोचितविशेषाशेषलोकशरण्य ! प्रणता-
तिहर ! आश्रितवात्सल्यैकमहोदधे ! अनवरतविदितनिखिलभूतजातया-
थात्म्य ! सत्यकाम ! सत्यसंकल्प ! आपत्सख ! काकुत्स्थ ! श्रीमन् !
नारायण ! पुरुषोत्तम ! श्रीरङ्गनाथ ! मम नाथ ! नमोऽस्तु ते ।

“I bow to Sri Ranganath, my Lord, who is the ocean of infinite mercy, the shelter of all without any distinction or differentiation, the destroyer of the troubles of those who seek Him, the one ocean of affection for those who rely on Him, the constant Knower of the real inner truth about all beings, one who is of true Kama and true Sankalpa, the friend of those in trouble, Kakutstha, possessed of Sri, Narayana, Purushottama, Sri Ranganatha, my Lord !”

17. KEDARNATH

PANDAVAS in company of Lomasa and other sages came up to the Gandhamadana mount in search of Arjuna.

Sage Lomasa says :

इन्द्रस्य जाम्बूनदपर्वताद् वै
 शृणोमि घोषं तव देवि गङ्गे ।
 गोपाययेमं सुभगे गिरिभ्यः
 सर्वाजमीढोपचितं नरेन्द्रम् ।
 ददस्व शर्मं प्रविविक्ततोऽस्य
 शैलानिमाञ्छैलसु ते नृपस्य ।
 उक्त्वा तथा सागरगां स विप्रो
 यतो भवस्वेति शशास पार्थम् ॥

“Goddess Ganga! I hear the deep roaring sound of your flow from the Sumeru mountain. King Yudisthira, the scion of the family of King Ajamidha (son of Hastin, the founder of Hastinapura, who in turn was the fifth successor of Dushyanta's son, Bharata, who gave the name Bharatavarsha to India) is now about to enter the Gandhamadana mount of the Himalayas. O! Daughter of Mountain! protect him here and bless him”. Having thus prayed to the river Ganga, Sage Lomasa enjoined upon Yudisthira to be pure and self-controlled on his mountain journey.”

—*Vanaparva*, Ch. 139, 16-17.

The temple of Kedarnath is situated in the Himalayas at an elevation of 11,735 feet above sea level. Its location is 30° 44' North latitude and 79° 6' East longitude. It is in Patti Malla Kaliphat in the Nagpur pargana. The well-kept and attractive temple of Siva Lord Kedarnath, stands

on the ridge which juts out at right angles from below the snowy peak known as Mahapanth (22,850 ft. high).

The range of mountains on which this ancient shrine of reputation stands is known as the range of the Rudra-Himalaya. This Rudra-Himalaya is also called the Sumeru Parvata or the Pancha Parvata. The latter name is given to it because it has five peaks—Rudra-Himalaya, Vishnupuri, Bhramapuri, Udgari-Kantha, and Swargarohini. It was on the last of these peaks that the four Pandava brothers died, survived by only Yudishthira and his faithful dog. The Gandhamadana hill is a part of the Rudra-Himalaya. According to the description given in the *Mahabharata* this hill starts, a short distance to the north-east of Badarik-asram. Sage Lomasa tells Yudishthira :

तपसा शक्यते गन्तुं पर्वतं गन्धमादनम् ।

“One can reach this difficult mountain only with great perseverance and penance”. The succeeding generations by their frequent visit to this sacred spot have created many facilities and reduced the rigours of the mountain *yatra*.

The majestic Himayan is referred to in the *Rigveda* as establishing the greatness of the Lord :

यस्येमे हिमवन्तो महित्वा

यस्य समुद्रं रसया सहाहुः ।

यस्येमे प्रदिशो यस्य बाहू

कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ।

—*Rigveda*, 1-121-4.

“To which other deity shall we offer our prayers? On account of your prowess, mountains like Himalayas and the oceans with rivers are created and the distant quarters are designated as your mere arms.”

Sivapurana, *Kotirudra Samhita* Ch. 19 (Venkateswar Press edition) records the following legend about Kedara.

Nara and Narayana, two sages being the incarnations of Hari, were once practising penance in Badrikasram. They used to prepare an earthen *linga* of Siva and worship it. On account of their devoted, single minded, and *Puja* of long duration, Siva was pleased and asked them to seek any *vara*. They prayed that Lord Sankara should stay at Kedara permanently in the form of a *Jyotirlinga* for the benefit and *darsana* of humanity. Since then Siva has remained as a *Jyotirlinga*. The Pandavas, after the great war, were advised to come here to gain mental peace. It is said that Lord Siva, on seeing the Pandavas, assumed the form of a male buffalo and started running away. When the Pandavas tried to catch Him, Siva entered the earth and only the hindquarters of His body remained behind as Kedareswar. It is said that His front part is in Nepal. The legend says that Siva, when He thus entered the ground, became fivefold—His hinder part remained at Kedara, His arms at Tunganatha, His face at Rudranatha, His belly at Madhyameswara and *Jata* at Kalpeswara. All these five places in the Himalayas are known as Pancha-Kedara and devotees visit all of them. Pandavas prayed Kedara Prabhu and became happy:

तत्र नित्यं हरः साक्षात् क्षेत्रे केदारसंज्ञके ।

भारतीभिः प्रजाभिश्च तथैव परिपूज्यते ।

“At Kedara, Siva Himself has been worshipped from time immemorial by the nationals of Bharata in the same manner in which the Pandavas worshipped the Lord”.

—*Sivapurana Kotirudra*, 19, 18.

अस्य खण्डस्य स स्वामी सर्वेशोऽपि विशेषतः ।

सर्वकामप्रदः शम्भुः केदाराख्यो न संशयः ।

“Kedara Sambhu, the Lord of everything, is undoubtedly the special presiding deity of this Bharata Khanda and the yielder of all desires.”

—*Sivapurana, Kotirudra*, 19. 25.

It has been recommended that the faithful should give here *dana* of a *kankana* or arm-ring.

Those who visit Kedara, first visit Jamnotri and Gangotri, carrying with them the holy waters from the sources of Jamna and Ganga for *abhisheka* on Kedara Prabhu.

For this purpose people come from Haridwar to Rishikesh and proceed to Devprayag, Tehri, and Dharasu. After visiting Jamnotri they came to Uttarkashi and Gangotri; thence to Trijuginarayan, Gaurikund and Kedara. From Rishikesh people can also go straight to Kedara via Devprayag, Srinagar, Rudraprayag and Ukhimath. The other way is to start from Kathgodam via Bhimtal, Dwara-hat, Karnaprayag and Chamoli; then from Chamoli to Ukhimath and Kedara and again from Chamoli to Vishnu-prayag and Badarinath. People usually enter via Haridwar and come back via Kathgodam.

Mahabharata records that the Pandavas came to this Gandhamadana mount several times. Arjuna came here to perform penance and secure from Siva the Pasupata astra.

The Pandavas came in search of Arjuna when they had had no news of him for a long time. Those unable to walk along this mountainous way take the help of *kandi*, *dandi* or *jhampan*. Draupadi was not able to walk and Ghatotkacha carried her in a *kandi*. Similarly other friends of his carried the other Pandavas and sages for some distance and relived them of their fatigue.

Draupadi then came across a very sweet smelling heavenly lotus—*Kalyanasaugandhikam*—and desired Bhima to bring them in large numbers. Bhima went in search of them, met his brother and Vayu's son Hanuman, went to Kubera's lake and brought the lotuses desired by Draupadi.

In the Sabha Parva, Arjuna is mentioned as having

conquered and crossed the Himalayan region and gone to the Rishika country, which is identified with Russia.

Finally the Pandavas came here for the last time and four of them passed away near the Swargarohini peak.

Near Kedara is the source of the river Mandakini. It is also called Kaliganga. This river joins Alaknanda (which flows near Badarinath) at Rudraprayag after about 45 miles. A bath in Mandakini is highly beneficial. Between the shrines of Badari and Kedara stands the mount. Without it, the distance between the two would be very short. But as the mount is difficult to climb, pilgrims have to take a circuitous route of about nine days.

The image of Lord Kedara is in the form of a huge rough stone. Pilgrims apply ghee and then embrace this *Jyotirlinga* of Kedara Prabhu.

The priests at Kedara, Guptakasi, Ukhimath and Madhyamesvara are under the head priest called the Raval of Kedarnath having his establishment at the Ukhimath. They are Jangam Goswamis and belong to the Lingayat or the Veera Saiva sect.

The road from Gaurikund to Kedara, of about eleven miles, is rather difficult, but full of picturesque mountainous scenes. At Gaurikund, there are hot springs and pilgrims take a bath in them with great devotion. Gauri is said to have taken her bath here after giving birth to Kartikeya. Tradition records that a little to the south at Trijuginarayan, Siva and Parvati were married and that the fire enkindled at the time of their marriage is still burning at the Agnikund. On the way from Trijuginarayan to Kedara, one finds the Mundkatta Ganesh—the headless Ganesh. The legend is that Ganesh was created by Parvati out of her perspiration and made to guard the entrance while she was taking her bath. Siva accidentally came in, Ganesh did not permit him to enter, Siva in rage cut his

head off, and on Parvati's request revived him and gave him the face of an elephant.

In winter, the Kedarapuri is covered with snow. The Kedara Temple is opened when the sun enters Mesha or Aries in Vaisakha and is closed when the sun enters Scorpio. At that time the priests go to Ukhimath where the worship of Kedaranath is continued in the winter season. Even in Vaisakha, there is severe cold at Kedara and many pilgrims return immediately after the *darsana* without venturing to spend a night there.

Four miles from the temple is a precipice leading to the Mahapanth peak which is known as Bhairon Jhap. Devotees used to throw themselves off the summit and give up their life. This practice, like Sati, has been prohibited by Government legislation.

At the time of the Kumbha Mela at Haridwar, when Jupiter is in Aquarius every 12 years, pilgrimages to Kedara and Badari has a special sanctity. Similarly every six years, there is the Ardhha-Kumbha; On these occasions, the pilgrims first attend the Mela at Haridwar and then complete their round of Kedara and Badari.

In Kedarakhanda it is stated that :

अकृत्वा दर्शनं वैश्य केदारस्याघनाशिनः ।

यो गच्छेद् वदरीं तस्य यात्रा निष्फलां व्रजेत् ।

"The pilgrimage to Badari without the *darsana* of sin-removing Kedara is fruitless".

Staunch Saivites visit Kedara alone; staunch Vaishnavites visit Badari alone; but the mass of the Hindu community visit both the shrines. Adi Sankaracharya gave impetus to the worship of both of them. At Badari, he established his Jyotirmath. At Kedara, tradition has it that Sankaracharya gave up his body.

Laksmidhar (1100-1130 A.D.) in his *Tirtha Kalpataru* quotes extensively from *Devi Bagavata* about Kedara.

That very passage is verbatim given in *Viramitrodaya*, *Tirthaprakasa*. It says that Lord Siva stays in the place called *Isana Sikara*. There is also the *Retaskund* and by drinking its water, it is said there is no rebirth. The procedure is thus prescribed: "The faithful should bathe in river *Mandakini* and offer *pindas* to the ancestors. Having bowed to *Siva*, *Uma*, *Ganesh* and other deities, one should thrice drink the water from that *kunda* with his right hand, thrice with closed hands, and thrice directly by the mouth, thinking himself to be the *Nandin*, the vehicle of the Lord. He should get up, dance before the Lord, and stand with closed hands. He has done his life-work. He is one with the Lord. His entire *kula* is liberated."

In *Vishnu Dharma Sutra* (100 to 300 A.D.) Ch. 85, the various sacred places are named as fit for the performance of the *sraddha*. In the 17th *Sutra* is mentioned *Kedara* which is identified by *Nanda Pandita* with the famous *Kedara* of the Himalayas. Similarly in *sutra* 23 is mentioned the river *Mahaganga* which is identified with the *Alaknanda* at *Badari*. In *sutra* 36 is mentioned the *Uttaramanasa* in the *Kedara* mountains. *Sraddhas* at all these places in the Himalaya region are considered to be very efficacious.

In order to practise penance—to please *Siva* to secure the *Pasupata* weapon—*Arjuna* came on the *Gandhamadana* mount at a place called the *Indrakila* Hill. It is identified at *Bhilesvara* between *Ranibag* and *Srinagar*. *Yudishthira* tells *Arjuna* that *Vyasa* had imparted to him an *Upanishad* or secret esoteric knowledge and if its application was made judiciously, one would have a clear vision and prespective of the entire universe.

कृष्णद्वैपायनात् तात गृहीतोपनिषन्मया ।

तथा प्रयुक्तया सम्पद् जगत्सर्वं प्रकाशते ।

—*Vana Parva*, Ch. 37, 10, 11.

The whole of this incident is woven into a great Mahakavya by Poet Bharavi in *Kiratarjuniyam*. Siva assumed the form of a Kirata and made Arjuna fight with him. Bharavi says *Kiratarjuniyam* 18-14).

तपसा तथा न मुदमस्य ययौ

मगवान् तथा विपुलसत्त्वतया ।

"The Lord was not so much pleased by his penance as by his large-hearted manliness."

The Himalaya has been very passionately described by Indian poets. This measuring rod of the earth, the dear calf of the mother cow earth, the store-house of endless gems and precious herbs, the perpetually pure with eternal snow, the abode of Siddhas, Yakshas and Sadhus, is the king of mountains. Female yaks spread out and wave their beautiful white tails at him and prove his sovereign's title "Giriraja" as if by the waving of the *Chamaris*

Bharavi, describing the Himalaya, says:

वीतजन्मजरसं परं शुचि

ब्रह्मणः पदमुपैतुमिच्छताम् ।

आगमादिव तमोपहादितः

सम्भवन्ति मतयो भवच्छिदः ।

—*Kiratarjuniyam*, 5-22.

"True and liberating knowledge has emanated from this place as from the srutis, dispelling dark ignorance, for the benefit of those who seek the highest and the pure state of Brahman, devoid of births and old age."

And here abides Lord Siva. Kalidasa describes Siva in His Yogic posture:

पर्यङ्कवन्धस्थिरपूर्वकाय-

मुज्वायतं सन्नमितोभयांसम् ।

उत्तानपाणिद्वयसन्निवेशात् ।

प्रफुल्लराजीवमिवाङ्गमध्ये ॥

—*Kumarāsambhayam* 3-45.

“Siva was seated cross-legged in what is called a *Virasana* (each foot below the opposite thigh); His upper body was fixed and steady; He sat straight and erect; His shoulders raised and inclined; in His lap were placed the two hands with upward palms like full blown red lotuses.”

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Bharavi, describing the Himalaya, says:

वीतजन्मजरसं परं श्रुचि

ब्रह्मणः पदमुपेतुमिच्छताम् ।

आगमादिव तमोपहादितः

सम्भवन्ति मत्तयो भवच्छिदः ।

—*Kiratarjuniyam*, 5-22.

“True and liberating knowledge has emanated from this place as from the srutis, dispelling dark ignorance, for the benefit of those who seek the highest and the pure state of Brahman, devoid of births and old age.”

And here abides Lord Siva. Kalidasa describes Siva in His Yogic posture:

पर्यङ्कवन्धस्थिरपूर्वकाय-

मृज्वायतं सक्षमितोभयांसम् ।

उत्तानपाणिद्वयसन्निवेशात् ।

प्रफुल्लराजीवमिवाङ्गमध्ये ।

—*Kumarásambhavam* 3-45.

"Siva was seated cross-legged in what is called a *Virasana* (each foot below the opposite thigh); His upper body was fixed and steady; He sat straight and erect; His shoulders raised and inclined; in His lap were placed the two hands with upward palms like full blown red lotuses."

18. BADARINATH

ॐ नारायणाय विद्महे वासुदेवाय धीमहि ।

तन्नो विष्णुः प्रचोदयात्

—*Narayanopanishad* 1-6.

"Aum! Let us realise Narayan, contemplate on Vasudeva.

May Vishnu inspire and guide us."

ONE goes to Badari Visala for the celebrated temple of Narayana, incarnation of Vishnu, usually via Hardwar, Rishikesh, Devprayag, Kirtinagar, Srinagar, Rudraprayag ; then via Kedara to Chomoli, Pipalkoti Garudganga, Helang Chatti, Joshimath, Vishnuprayag, Pandukesvar, Hanuman Chatti, and finally to Badarinath.

The temple of Badarinath is situated in the Malla Painkhanda Pargana, about 184 miles from Hardwar, 105 miles from Srinagar and about 25 miles south of the Mana Pass. It is on the right bank of river Alaknanda. The valley in which it stands is three miles long and one mile broad. To the east and west of the valley stand the two famous and lofty mountains—the Nara and Narayana Parbats. This Himalayan temple is situated in 30° 44' North latitude and 79° 32' East longitude at an elevation of 10,284 feet above sea level.

The tradition is that the temple of Badarinarayan was erected by Adi Sankaracharya in about the 9th century A.D. He secured the image, which was lost, by diving deep in the Narada Kunda. Born at Kaladi in Kerala, son of Sivaguru and Ambika, Sankara embraced Sannyasa at the age of eight, and stayed at Kasi for some time. At the age of 11 he came to the spot near Ravigram which subse-

quently became famous at Jyotirmath, and lived in a cave for 5 years; at the age of sixteen and with his Himalayan genius which was outstanding, Sankara had already composed sixteen works including his famous Bhashyas on Brahmasutras, Gita and the Upanishads. After completing the works he was the first to offer his prayers and dedicate them to Narayana at Badari and so founded here one of his four principal monasteries known as the Uttaramnaya Jyotirmath. The present incumbent of the Gadi is H.H. Sri Krishnabodhasram Swami. This tradition is summarised in the following verse attributed to Kalidasa in his Sankaracharita.

गत्त्वैकादशवार्षिको बदरिकारण्ये सुपुण्याश्रमे
पञ्चाब्दाक्षरकुण्ठया निजधिया भाष्याग्निं यः षोडश ।
निर्माय प्रथमां चकार बदरीनारायणाचार्यं ततः
श्रीज्योतिर्मठमावबन्ध स गुरुः श्रीशङ्करो मन्त्रते ॥

At Joshimath, there is the temple of Nrisimha, also of Jyotirisvara Mahadeo, The presiding goddess is Purnagiri Devi.

The present temple of Badarinath has been built after several old ones were swept away by avalanches. Near the temple is the Tapta Kunda 16½ feet by 14½ feet with a thermal spring of hot sulphurous waters. A bath here is considered highly efficacious. The region around Badari is called the Vaishnava Khetra and in it are situated the Pancha Badaris—the Badarinarayana or the Visala Badari, Yogabadari at Pandukesvara, Bhavisyabadari near Tapovana, Vriddhabadari at Animath and Dyanabadari near Silang.

In the Badari-narayana or Visalabadari there are five tirthas -Rishiganga, Kurmadhara, Prahladadhara, Tapta-kunda and Naradakunda. There are also Pancha Silas in Badarikasram beting Naradasila, Varahasila, Markandeya-

sila, Nrisimbasila and Garudasila. A little north of Badarinath on the right bank of river Alaknanda is the famous Brahma Kapal which the pilgrims invariably visit. There the Sraddha is offered to dead ancestors who are promised immediate liberation thereafter,

नित्यं जल्पन्ति पितरो मद्वंशे कश्चिदुत्तमः ।

गमिष्यति विशालां यो तारितास्तेन वै वयम् ।

—*Skanda, Kedarukhanda, Badarimahatmya.*

"Ancestors constantly say that some illustrious descendant of theirs will visit Badari Visala, their offer Pindas to them at Brahma Kapal and that they shall then be liberated." Sraddha at this place is also recommended by Matsya 22-73 and Vishnu Dharma sutra 85-23.

After a Sraddha here it is not necessary to perform any further Sraddha in future for the ancestors as they are already liberated, they have merged in Brahman and no ancestor remains with any individuality to accept any Pinda thereafter. They have gone to the highest abode of Vishnu from this Brahma Kalpa where they were till then earnestly waiting for some of their descendants to come.

Badari is classified as Sthula, Sukshma etc. in 4 ways with varying areas comprised in each of them.

One who desires to have a yatra of Badari is prescribed to carry out the following procedure. "In his home town he should make a Sankalpa of yatra, salute Narayana and proceed. So long as one is alive and the limbs are strong; one should start without delay. He should avoid three things on the way—theft, violence and begging, including acceptance of food from others. On the way he should visit holy spots where ancient sages have performed penance for the benefit of humanity. As far as possible, one should go on foot.

चरणानां च साफल्यं कुर्याद् नदरिकागमात् ।

At Jyotirmath, he should unfailingly salute Nrisimha; bathe at Vaikhanasa tirtha, give *dana* at Kuberasila, bathe in Rishiganga, put on new clothes, bow lowly like a horizontal stick to the temple of Badari which is then visible, sip water at Kurmadhara, salute Jaya and Vijaya (near the Sabhamandapa) and then enter the temple."

On the right bank of Alaknanda, the temple of Narayana is about 45 feet high and faces east. There is a golden Kalasa on the top. Inside the temple Lord Narayana is seated in Padmasana with two hands in *yoga mudra*. The image is of black *saligram* stone about three feet high. On the left there are stone images of Nara and Narayana, in front the images of Uddhava and Narada, and on the right those of Garuda and Kubera.

Badari has been visited from time immemorial by Rishis, saints, emperors, kings, common people, the poor and the helpless, one and all from all corners of Bharata.

The Naivedya of Badari, if offered, can never be refused. There is no untouchability before the Lord, no impurity in accepting the Lord's Prasada from any one.

बदरीनाथनैवेद्यं यो मोहाद्धि परित्यजेत् ।

चाण्डालादधमो ज्ञेयः सर्वघर्मबहिष्कृतः ।

चाण्डालेनापि संस्पृष्टं न दोषाय भवेत्कचिद् ।

"One refusing the Prasad with ignorance and a sense of superiority is worse than a chandala unfit for any religious duty. Even touched by the lowliest, it is never impure."

One giving *dana* of even a little of gold or silver here is never born poor in the next 1000 births

Badarikshetra is measured from Kanva's Asram to Nandagiri, about three yojanas by twelve yojanas.

About eight miles from Badari is Vasudara Tirtha where the eight Vasus practised penance. It is a difficult place to reach as water is falling from the rocks. It is said

that if anyone standing below it is pure, the water falls straight on him; if he is sinful, water falls on him in a slanting manner.

The priests of Badarinath are the Nambudri Brahmins of Malabar. The head is called the Raval and has his establishment at Joshimath. In winter, Badarinath is worshipped at Joshimath.

It is said that the idol of Nrisimha at Joshimath has one arm which gets thinner every day and that some day it will fall off, and then the road to Badari will be blocked by a landslide and a new temple of Badari will be erected at Bhavishya Badari near Tapovan.

Legend says that the two sages Nara and Narayana, sons of Dharma and Kala, and who were the fourth Avatara of Vishnu, practised severe penance at Badarikasram to secure spiritual peace.

तुयै धर्मकलासर्गे नरनारायणावृषी ।

भूत्वाऽऽत्मोपशमोपेतमकरोद् दुश्चरं तपः ।

—Bhagavata 3-9.

On account of their penance, Indra was terrified and sent a few Apsarases. Narayana was angry and prepared to curse Indra, but Nara pacified him. Then Narayana created Urvasi, better than the lot sent by Indra, and presented her to Indra. On special request of the Apsarases to marry them, Narayana promised to marry them in his next incarnation as Krishna. Nara and Narayana became in their next incarnation Arjuna and Krishna. *Devi Bagavata* records a legend that once Prahlada saw some military equipment near Badarikasram, the hermitage of Nara and Narayana. Taking them to be imposters, Prahlada fought with them and the war went on endlessly. Ultimately, Vishnu intervened and restored peace.

Narayana, identified with Vasudeva and Vishnu, came to be regarded as the highest divinity and the school which worshipped him was called the Pancharatra or the Bhagavata Sampradaya. Its most ancient doctrines are preserved in the Narayaniya section of Santiparva of *Mahabharata*. Like the Gita of Bhishmaparva, the Narayaniya Parva too has 18 chapters.

Narayana is derived, as the resort or Asraya of Naaraa. Naaraa means water; Nara also means men collectively (from Nara). Usually man is the singer, God the object of worship. In Purushasukta of Rigveda (RV. 10-90), Narayana is the Rishi and Purusha or Nara is the Devata. Of course, Purusha here represents universal man with all divine qualities infinitely magnified. Aitareya Aranyaka 2-3-2 says that Atma or the self found its proper rest in Purusha because Purusha has knowledge, speaks and sees intelligently, knows what would be in store in the future, knows what is and what is not worth seeing and achieving, and with all the limitations of a mortal, he has the ambition to win immortality. मत्त्यनामतमीप्ससि ।

That is why Bhagawata says in 11-9-28

सृष्ट्वा पुराणि विविधान्यजयाऽऽत्मशक्त्या ।

वृक्षान् सरीसृपपशून् खगदंशमत्स्यान् ।

तैस्तैरतुष्टद्वयो पुरुषं विधाय

ब्रह्मावबोधधिषणं मुदमाप देवः ।

“With his eternal Atmic power, God created various bodies—plants, serpents, beasts, birds, insects, fish; yet he was not pleased. He then created Man with intelligence which can realise Brahman—and the Lord Creator was immensely satisfied.”

What more is needed to establish the dignity of man, his capacity to reach the highest and God's faith that Man will fulfil His mission? This Nara is given a place by the

side of Narayana. In Puranas there are instances of men sharing Indra's throne.

अर्धासनं गोत्रमिदोऽधितस्थौ (रघुवंश)

Mundaka Upanishad describes man and God as two birds sitting on the same tree, one eating and enjoying the fruit, the other merely watching as Sakshin.

The Narayaniya Parva of *Mahabharata* starts with saying that Nara, Narayana, Hari and Krishna were the four sons of Dharma. Out of them Nara and Narayana practised penance in Badarikasram. Vyasa salutes Nara and Narayana at the beginning of every Parvan and they are frequently identified with Arjuna and Krishna. *Mahabharata* says that once Narada went to Nara and Narayana at Badari. Narayana was performing his daily worship. Narada asked as to who it was whom Narayana himself was worshipping. Narayana replied "We worship Atma". Narada wanted to see that. Narayana asked him to go to Swetadwipa where Narada would find the original form of Narayana. Narada went to Swetadwipa, saw Narayana in both His aspects—the Nirguna and the Visvarupa. Narada learnt the Pancharatra doctrines from Narayana Himself at Swetadwipa, and revealed them to others. He again came to Badari and saw Nara and Narayana.

The legend of Uparichara Vasu and of the seven sages known as Chitrasikhandins who sang the praise of Narayana is also narrated there,

Panini (5th century B.C.) has alluded in 4-3-98 to the Bhakti sampradaya of Vasudeva who is identified with Narayana.

Skanda, in Badari Mahatmya, derives the word Narada as the sage who poured Ganga water (Naara) over the Lord at Badari: therefore he is called Narada (Naara+Da),

Badarikasram is also famous as the place of the her-

mitage of Vyasa, also called Badarayana, as he was born in the forest of Badari. He rearranged and measured the Vedas and is therefore called Vyasa. He physically created the personages of Mahabharata, survived them and described them as unforgettable characters in the great and immortal epic. With Ganesa as his scribe, Vyasa left nothing unsaid व्यासोच्छिष्टं जगत्सर्वम् ।

पुण्ये हिमवतः पादे मेघ्ये गिरिगुहालये ।

विशोध्य देहं धर्मात्मा दर्शसंस्तरमाश्रितः ।

शुचिः सनियमो व्यासः शान्तात्मा तपसि स्थितः ।

भारतस्येतिहासस्य धर्मेणान्वीक्ष्य तां गतिम् ।

प्रविश्य योगं ज्ञानेन सोऽपश्यत्सर्वमन्ततः ।

—*Adiparva*, 1, 39 to 41.

"On the pure plateau of Himalaya, in a sacred mountain cave, the high-souled Vyasa sat on a seat of Darbha, having cleaned his body with Yogic exercises. Practising penance, of peaceful mind, leading a chaste and well-regulated life, aided by Dharma, he saw the history of Bharata from event to event; he could see everything from beginning to end as he had realised the highest and entered the stage of yoga or Samadhi."

Parasara Smriti 1-5 says that Vyasa's father Parasara resided at Badari.

ततस्त ऋषयः सर्वे धर्मतत्त्वार्थकाक्षिणः ।

ऋषिं व्यासं पुरस्कृत्य गता बदरिकाश्रमम् ।

—प. स्म. १-५

Matysa 201-24 says that Mitra and Varuna practised penance here.

Pandavas, in search of Arjuna, had come to this Asrama of Nara and Narayana. "Hunger and thirst, cold and heat, cause no trouble here and all sorrows are removed at this spot." (*Vana parva*).

At Pandukesvara, King Pandu had killed with an arrow a sage who was sporting with his wife having assumed the form of a deer; the sage cursed him saying that Pandu would die when in consortium with his own wife. Pandu, highly grieved by this curse, had performed a penance here.

At Vishnuprayag, Narada worshipped Vishnu. The word Prayag is used for a Sangama where two rivers meet. At Vishnuprayag, one of the five prayags, Alaknanda meets Dhaval ganga. Alaknanda is also called Vishnuganga here. The legend is that Ganga flowed from the leg of Vishnu.

At Hanuman Chatti, Bhima had met Hanuman, his brother, and son of Vayu. At Chamoli, people purchase Kasturi and silajit. Four miles from Chamoli is the Virahi Sangam, the meeting place of Alaknanda and Virahi rivers. Here Siva, feeling pangs of separation on the death of his consort Sati, had performed penance. At Garudaganga, people pick up stones whose application is supposed to have the power to destroy the poisonous effects of serpent bites.

As Yadavas were about to be destroyed and Dwaraka about to be submerged in the ocean Krishna advised Uddhava to go to Badarikasram and perform penance, for Krishna and Narayana were one and it was therefore Krishna's own Asram at Badari.

ततस्तमन्तर्हृदि सन्निवेश्य
गतो महामागवतो विशालाम् ।
यथोपदिष्टां जगदेकबन्धुना
तपःसमास्थाय हरेरगाद् गतिम् ।

—*Bhagavata* 11-29-47.

"Uddhava, the great Bhagavata, contemplated on Krishna and his *upadesa* and went to Badari Visala as ad-

vised by the Friend of the Universe—Lord Krishna. Here he practised penance and secured the abods of Hari."

"In Bharata Varsha, the Lord, with spontaneous grace, has assumed the form of Bhagavan Nara Narayana; he continues to practise penance through his subtle incorporeal body till the end of the Kalpa for the benefit of self-controlled people. His penance augments Dharma (Duty), Jnana (Knowledge), Vairagya (asceticism), Aisvaryā (Sovereignty), Upasama (tranquillity) and Uparama (cessation of desires); brings about the realisation of the highest Brahman. The Knowledge of Pancharatra describing the Lord's prowess and of Sankya Yoga was taught by the Lord Himself. Sage Narada wanted that knowledge to be imparted to Savarni Manu. Along with the entire God-minded population of Bharata, Narada with humility and devotion approached Nara Narayana and thus prayed to him: "Aum ! We bow to Bhagavan Nara Narayana who is at peace with all; who is unselfish, who is the wealth of the poor and the helpless, who is the best among the Rishis, who is the highest teacher even of Paramahansas and who is the best among those Yogins who delight in the realisation of Atman. Our salutations unto Him, again and again !"

भारतेऽपि वर्षे भगवान् नरनारायणाख्य आकल्पान्तं उपचितधर्म-
ज्ञानवैराग्यैश्वर्योपशमोपरमात्मोपलम्भनं अनुग्रहायात्मवतामनुकम्पया
तपोऽव्यक्तगतिश्चरति ।९। तं स्मवान् नारदो वर्णाश्रमवतीभिर्भारतीभिः
प्रजाभिर्भगवत्प्रोक्ताभ्यां सांख्ययोगाभ्यां भगवदनुभावोपवर्णनं सावर्ण्ये
देक्ष्यमाणः परमभक्तिभावेनोपसरति हृदं चाभिगुणाति ।१०। ॐ नमो भगवते
उपशमशीलायोपरतानात्म्याय नमोऽकिञ्चनविताय ऋषिऋषभाय नरनारा-
यणाय परमहंसपरमगुरवे आत्मारामाधिपतये नमो नम इति ।११।

19. PUSHKAR

सर्वतीर्थेषु राजेन्द्र तीर्थं त्रैलोक्यविश्रुतम् ।

पुष्करं नाम विख्यातं महाभागः समाविशेत् ।

दशकोटिसहस्राणि तीर्थानां वै महामते ।

सन्निध्यं पुष्करे येषां त्रिसन्ध्यं कुरुनन्दन ।

—वनपर्व ८०; २०, २१ ।

SAGE Pulastya describes to veteran Bhishma the greatness of the various Tirthas. After introducing them generally, he describes them one by one. The first and foremost on Pulastya's list is Pushkar.

Says Pulastya, "O Rajendra ! the learned scion of the Kuru family ! Only the fortunate can visit Pushkar—the best and the most universally known Tirtha among all Tirthas. Ten thousand crores of them abide here permanently."

The sacred Pushkar Lake is situated seven miles west of Ajmer. Between the two lies the Nag Parbat or the serpent mountain. In the narrow valley surrounded by rocky hills stands this most sacred lake in India which since time immemorial has been frequented by millions of Hindus year after year. It is called Pushkar-Raja or King of Tirthas. Visits to other famous spots like the four Dharmas—Badari, Puri, Rameswar and Dwaraka—would be incomplete without a bath in Pushkar waters. The grandfather of all creation, Brahma, stays eternally here and is worshipped by Gods and demons alike. One visit to Pushkar in the month of Kartik secures the abode of Brahma. All sins committed from birth onwards are said to be destroyed by merely by a bath here. "Just as Krishna deserved the first place of honour among men and Gods, so is Push-

kar said to be the first among all Tirthas" (Vanaparva) पुष्करादीनि तीर्थानि । If we want to make even a casual reference to Tirthas, the invariable phrase used is "Tirthas beginning with Pushkar."

It is said "everything was pure in the Krita age; in Treta, Pushkar became sacred; in Dwapara, Kurukshetra; and in the Kali age, Ganga became sacred." (Vana parva 83-90). This shows the antiquity of Pushkar as a sacred place.

Anusasana Parva 64-9 groups together Pushkar, Prabhasa, Naimisa, Ocean, Devika (Sarayu), and the Hiranyabindu Tirtha, and states that after a visit to these Tirthas, one has only to be awakened by welcome speeches of heavenly damsels in the Vimana carrying him to heaven, of course, after death.

पुष्करं च प्रभासं च नैमिषं सागरोदकम् ।

देविकामिन्द्रमार्गं च स्वर्णविन्दुं विगाह्य च ।

विद्योच्यते विमानस्थः सोऽप्सरामिरमिषुतः ।

Pushkar is referred to in *Valmiki Ramayana* Bala-kanda 61 as the place where Visvamitra settled down to perform penance. King Trisanku wanted to go to heaven in his physical form. He was driven out of heaven. He approached Visvamitra who finding that Trisanku was being hurled down from heaven, created a new heaven for him with the strength of his spiritual lustre. The Gods compromised with Visvamitra and gave Trisanku a fit place in the sky. After this event, sage Visvamitra wished to settle in some sacred spot so that none would disturb him in his penance. So he came down to Pushkar.

एवमुक्त्वा महातेजाः पुष्करेषु महामुनिः ।

तप उयं दुराधर्षं तेषु मूलफलाशनः ।

—*Balakanda* 61-4.

While Visvamitra was engrossed in his Tapas at Push-

kar, Sunahsepa came to him seeking shelter. The version according to Balakanda 61 and 62 is this. King Ambarisha wanted to perform a sacrifice. The animal for the sacrifice was stolen by Indra. The sacrifice had to be completed. It was suggested that a substitute could be given. Ambarisha offered a good price for it. One Richika (also called Agigarta) had three sons. The eldest was liked by the father, the youngest by the mother. The middle-one Sunahsepa, therefore offered himself as a substitute. Ambarisha while carrying him from his parents stopped at the Pushkar hermitage of Visvamitra. As Sunahsepa fell at the feet of the sage, the latter asked his sons whether any of them would substitute himself for Sunahsepa and thus save him. None came forward. So they were all cursed by the sage. Then Visvamitra gave two special gathas to Sunahsepa whereby Indra was pleased and Sunahsepa was released. Thereafter Visvamitra again continued his penance. He was once disturbed therein by Menaka who stayed with him for 10 years. Again he started penance. Then Rambha disturbed him. This time the sage did not relent and cursed her to be a stone. The penance continued. Brahma himself came to him and made him a Brahmarishi. But no! ब्रह्मपुत्रो वसिष्ठो मामेवं वदतु देवता :! (Balakanda 64-24). He wished that Vasishtha should acknowledge him as such. Appreciation should come from the most important one.

ततः प्रसादितो देवै वसिष्ठो जपतां वरः ।

सख्यं चकार ब्रह्मर्षिरेवमस्त्विति चाब्रवीत् ।

विश्वामित्रोऽपि धर्मात्मा लब्ध्वा ब्राह्मण्यमुत्तमम् ।

पूजयामास ब्रह्मर्षि वसिष्ठं जपतां वरम् ।

—Balakanda 65, 25 & 27.

“Vasishtha, the best of Munis, was then gratified by the Gods; he agreed to and did make peace add friendship with sage Visvamitra. The latter, too, having acquired the best

of Brahminhood with his austerities, honoured Brahmarshi Vasishtha, the great sage."

In *Aitareya Brahmana* 7-3, the story of Sunahsepa is narrated with reference to King Harischandra and not to Ambarisha. There the deity to be pleased was Varuna and not Indra. In *Rigveda* 3-53 it is stated that Visvamitra had acquired the Sasarpri Vidya from Jamadagni. It could give mental brilliance and capacity to compose the best of literature in prose and verse (Sayana). The whole of the 3rd Mandala of *Rigveda* is attributed by tradition to Sage Visvamitra, proving the efficacy of this Sasarpri. He conversed with rivers Vipas (Beas) and Sutudri (Sutlej). He is the Rishi of the famous *Gayatri Mantra* (*Rigveda* 3-62-10) which means "We contemplate upon the lustre, most divine and the best, identical with the highest principle Tat,—The Bharga, which breaks the mass of darkness and ignorance—that lustre of the inner impeller Savitri, the Antaryamin of all. May he guide and direct our intellect along the path of righteousness." This prayer, as is evident from the verb "Dhimahi" in plural, is not merely an individual but also a mass prayer of the humanity. This *gayatri* is called the essence and the mother of Vedas. It originated from the intuition of the sage who acquired the highest Brahmavarchas and spiritual supremacy through continued self-discipline and severe austerities and who filled it with the entire Bala of his accumulated Tapas. It has been adopted by the whole of Bharata as the quintessence of Vedas. Without it there can be no initiation. It is the *mantra* repeated with worshipful reverence by millions since time immemorial and these countless devout have contributed their mite in augmenting its strength.

Padma purana (srishti, 15 to 19) describes Pushkar in detail. Once, Brahma was making a round of the earth.

He came across the forest near Pushkar. It was like Nandanavana, pleasing to the eyes, full of green trees, fragrant flowers, and sweet fruits. Brahma, holding a lotus in his hand was very happy to be there. The trees welcomed him with a shower of flowers. Pitamaha Brahma accepted their hospitality and asked the trees to seek any boon they desired. The trees requested the Pitamaha to stay for ever in the Pushkar forest. Brahma granted their wish and stayed there for a thousand years. This was the first and great *Vana-Mahotsava*, where trees of luxuriant growth invited the Lord Creator to accept flowered bouquets reverentially offered by them.

Once while Brahma was there, he dropped his lotus on the ground. It created an enormous sound which shook the earth. Gods came to Brahma and asked him what it was. Brahma explained that there a demon called Vajranabha who was killing young children; he had therefore killed the demon with his lotus sanctified with *mantras*. The place where that lotus was thrown became known thereafter as the Pushkar (Lotus) Tirtha. The lotus which fell from his hand rebounded at three places and at all of them water issued forth from the ground. These three places are situated within a circuit of six miles and are known as the Jyeshtha, the Madhya, and the Kanishtha Pushkar. The presiding deities of the three are Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra.

At Jyeshtha Pushkar, Brahma resolved to perform a sacrifice. Brahma was to perform it with his wife Savitri. At the appointed hour of the Yajna, Savitri was late as she was waiting for her female friends. The hour was so auspicious that Barhma would not let the moment pass without the intended Yajna. He therefore asked Indra to find a suitable girl for him to sit by his side as his wife for the Yajna. Indra secured a Gopa Kanya. She was thrown

into a cow's mouth and on her rebirth from the cow she was called Gayatri. Brahma married her and kept his time. However, Siva interrupted the sacrifice. He was somewhat pacified by the Gods undertaking to build a temple of Siva at Pushkar. The sacrifice then proceeded. At this moment Savitri came. She saw Gayatri in her place and was naturally highly enraged. There were curses, counter-curses, and then suggestions of the means to restrict the effect of these curses. Savitri cursed Brahma by saying that none would worship him. Savitri then went away to a hill to the South of Pushkar where there is still a temple dedicated to her.

At Pushkar no animals are allowed to be killed.

Pushkar town is situated on the lake of the same name. It is famous as a Tirtha for Brahma. On the full-moon day of Kartik, a great fair is held here. On this day, Brahma is worshipped throughout India. The old temples of Pushkar were destroyed by Aurangzeb. The present temples, Dharmasalas and Ghats are those constructed by the Rajputana Princes. In Kartik, lacs of pilgrims visit this place. The area round about this lake is famous for lotuses. It is said that river Saraswati starts from this Pushkar lake after it disappeared at Vinasana near Kurukshetra. Pushkar is the vedi or the sacrificial altar of Pitamaha Brahma. There are various ghats like Brahma-Ghat, Gaughat, Kapala-mochana-ghat, Badarighat and Swarupghat.

The story of Swarup ghat is this. In the 9th century, the famous Parihar King Narhar Rao came here while hunting, and finding a pool of water in this area, he took a little of it in his hands to drink. Immediately, the white spots in his hands were cured with the mere touch of the water. He therefore rebuilt the lake which was in bad condition and built new ghats on all sides.

In Pushkar there are temples of Brahma, Badari-

narayan, Varahaji, Atmeswar Mahadeo and Savitri. The temple of Brahma is the biggest and the most important. The old one was destroyed by Aurangzeb and the present one was rebuilt by Gokul Chand Parekh, a Minister of Scindhia, in 1809 A.D. The old temple of Varahaji was built by Arnoraja (1123-50 A.D.) who also built the Anasagar at Ajmer. It was repaired in the time of Akbar by Sagar, brother of the famous Rana Pratap of Chitor. This Varahaji's temple was destroyed by Jehangir in 1613 A.D. and again by Aurangzeb. It was reconstructed in 1727 A.D. by Maharaja Jai Singh II of Jaipur. The temple of Badari Nathji was repaired by the Thakur of Kharva of Ajmer in 1800 A.D. and that of Atmesvara Mahadeo by Goomanji Rao, the Maratha Subedar of Ajmer (1809-16 A.D.) That of Savitri was built by the Purohit of Maharaja Ajit Singh of Marwar (1687-24 A.D.)

There is also a modern temple of Sri Rangji of the Ramanuja Vaishnavas.

In the temple of Brahmaji, there is the image of Brahma with four faces; on the left is Gayatri and on the right is Savitri. Near the dome are the images of Sanakadi brothers.

Near the Yajna Kund at Pushkar, there is the hermitage of Sage Agastya. It is said that Rama, Sita and Lakshmana had their ceremonial bath in Pushkar. The legend goes that King Parikshit performed the serpent-sacrifice at Pushkar.

Vishnu Dharma Sastra (100 to 300 A.D.) Ch. 85, 1 to 3, says

पुष्करेष्वक्षयं श्राद्धम् । जप्यहोमतपांसि च ।

पुष्करे स्नानमात्रात्सर्वपापेभ्यः पूतो भवति ।

"A sraddha performed at Pushkar yields inexhausti-

ble merit. So too do the Japa, Homa, and Tapas. A mere bath here purifies one from all sins."

Pushkar is one of the very rare Tirthas where Brahma, one of the three Gods of the Hindu Trinity is being worshipped today.

In the later Vedic hymns, the highest position is given to Visvakarma (*R. V.* 10; 81 and 82). He is an all-seeing God with faces in all directions. He is the creator of heaven and earth, knows all, and cannot be comprehended by mortals. He is also called Dhatri, and Vidhatri. Brihaspati and Brahmanaspati are also given attributes of the supreme being. Prajapati is called the creator and identified with Hiranyagarbha and Ka. One full hymn is addressed to him (*R. V.* 10-121). Throughout the hymn he is referred to as the God 'Ka', the preposition "who". Only the last *Rik* makes it clear that the God worshipped is Prajapati. In later *Samhitas* and *Brahmanas* Prajapati is regarded as the chief of the Gods, the father of not only Gods but also of Asuras and as the first sacrificer. He creates the worlds, the Vedas and the varnas. He is identified with Brahma (masculine).

One of the legends of Prajapati is of his incest with his daughter Ushas who ran away from him in the form of a female deer. Prajapati assumed the form of a male deer and followed her. Rudra, angry at the incest aimed an arrow at him. *Aitaraya Brahmana* 3-33 says that Rudra was created by the Gods out of terrible substances to punish Prajapati. This myth is transferred to the sky where the deer (Mriga), the archer (Mriga Vyadha) and the arrow (Isu Trikanda) are still pointed out in the form of stars. Rudra represents wrath against incest and sensuality and the sublimity of the ethical principles. See Pushpadanta's *Mahimnastotra*, verse 22:

प्रजानाथं नाथ ! प्रसन्नममिकं स्वां दुहितरं
 गतं रोहिदभूतां रिरमयिषुमृष्यस्य वपुषा ।
 धनुष्पाणे र्यातं दिवमपि सपत्राकृतममुं
 वसन्तं तेऽद्यापि त्यजति न मृगव्याधरभसः ॥

“Lord ! Your arrow, from the hand wielding the bow like that of an archer hunting a deer, does not leave even now the terrified Prajapati who is afflicted with the wound of your arrow and who desired to have a forced incest on his daughter who had assumed the form of a deer, and who with that intention was even following her in the sky.”

The other legend is the fight between Narayana and Brahma for supremacy. Both saw in between them a column of light which was Siva. Siva asked both of them to find out the upper and lower ends of this column of light. Vishnu went down but returned unsuccessful. Brahma went up and though unable to find it out, he fabricated the evidence of a cow and a ketaki. He was found out and this incident is said to have made Brahma the last in the Trinity and one whose worship was avoided. Another instance of Rudra insisting on truth, and meting out punishment on ethical principles even to the most highly placed. Brahma performed severe penances by way of expiation on the Gaudhamadana Mount and then only his worship was restored.

At the time of the destruction of the Tripura Demon by Siva, Brahma had become Siva's charioteer and Vishnu had become the arrow.

Brahma originally had five heads but once in a quarrel with Siya, the latter plucked his fifth head with his nail. Siva then had the demerit of Brahmahatya which followed him. Siva, in expiation, had to travel around begging with a skullbowl in his hand and it was only in the vicinity of Kasi that Siva could get rid of the begging bowl or Kapala. The Tirtha at Kasi is therefore known as Kapala

Mochana Tirtha. The fact that even Rudra could not escape Brahmahatya again establishes the supremacy of the ethical principles.

Apart from these legends, the greatness of Brahma is frequently referred to in the Upanishads. He was the first to be created. He imparted the Brahma Vidya to sage Atharvan. Similarly he imparted highest knowledge to Narada. Prajapati imparted knowledge to Narada. Prajapati imparted knowledge to Indra and Vircochana alike, though Indra being more disciplined had a greater understanding (*Chhandogya Upanishad*).

Many theories of world-creation are referred to in Puranas. Brahma is connected with most of them. He was born of the lotus from the navel of Vishnu. He then created the world in the same manner in which it originally was before it was absorbed into him at the time of Pralaya. Vedas came from him. Gayatri also came from him. She never leaves Brahma. He is called the Pitamaha.

In portions of the *Markandeya Purana* and the *Padma Purana*, Brahma is identified with the highest Brahman (neuter) of the Upanishads. It is believed that *Padma Purana*, which also contains the Pushkar Mahatmya, was originally a Brahma Purana. Padma and Pushkar both mean a lotus. In the Trimurti, Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra represent the three gunas of the Prakriti, the Rajas, the Satva, and the Tamas. But beyond these three, the fourth and the highest principle is said to control all three. This fourth or the Turiya is identified by Saivas with Siva, Bhagavatas with Vishnu, Sauras with the Sun, Saktas with Sakti, Brahmas with Brahma, Ganapatyas with Ganapati etc. The wise describe the same highest principle in different ways.

एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।

(RV. I-164-46).

Rigveda describes it in the form of Hiranyagarbha, Ka or Prajapati in this way :

हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्ततामे
 भूतस्य जातः पतिरेक आसीत् ।
 स दाधार पृथिवीं द्यामुतेमां
 कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥
 प्रजापते न त्वदेतान्यन्यो
 विश्वा जातानि परि ता बभूव ।
 यत्कामास्ते जुहुमस्तन्नो अस्तु
 वयं स्या पतयो रद्वीणाम् ॥

“Prajapati, the embryo in the Golden egg, existed before this world was created. On being born as this world, he became its one Lord. He supported the heaven and the earth. To ‘which deity’ shall we worship with offerings ?

“O Prajapati ! None other than you can pervade this entire creation. With whatever aspirations we worship you, let those be fulfilled. Let us be prosperous.”

Rigveda 10-121, 1 and 10

20. NASIK

किन्तु व्यादिश मे देशं सोदकं बहुकाननम् ।
यत्राश्रमपदं कृत्वा वसेयं निरतः सुखम् ।
ततोऽब्रवीन्मुनिश्रेष्ठः श्रुत्वा रामस्य भाषितम् ।
ध्यात्वा मुहूर्तं घर्मात्मा ततोवाच वचः शुभम् ॥
इतो द्वियोजने तात बहुमूलफलोदकः ।
देशो बहुमृगः श्रीमान् पञ्चवट्यभिविश्रुतः ।
तत्र गत्वाश्रमपदं कृत्वा सौमित्रिणा सह ।
रमस्व त्वं पितुर्वाम्यं यथोक्तमनुपालयन् ॥

Ramayana, Aranyakanda, 13, 11 to 14.

SRI Rama respectfully asked Sage Agastya: "Kindly point out to me a proper place full of forests and with plenty of water, so that I may fix my hermitage there and lead a happy life." Agastya, the best of sages, heard Rama's request and after giving it careful consideration he replied: "At a distance of two yojanas from this Asrama of mine there is the prosperous spot known as Panchavati. Roots, fruits and water are available there in plenty. Forest deer are numerous. Please go there with Lakshmana, build a hermitage, and without violating the words of your father, lead there a happy life".

Nasik is referred to in ancient literature a Nasikya. It is mentioned as Nasikya in the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali on Panini 6-1-63. The word is derived from Nasikaa or nose; tradition says that the place is so named because it was at this spot that the nose and ears of Surpanakha, Ravana's sister, were cut off by Lakshmana because she expressed an indecent desire to marry either Rama or Lakshmana and threatened to make a dish of Sita like a cannibal. Nasik is also derived from Nav Sikh.

The proverb is that—"Nasik Nav Tekavar vasavile"
—Nasik was settled on nine hills (*Bom. Gaz.* Vol. 16 p. 467.

Nasik is famous as a place of pilgrimage, especially once in every twelve years when Jupiter is in Leo. Lakhs of people from all over India gather for this Kumbha Yatra of Nasik, Tryambak and a bath in the river Godavari. In 1956 A.D. in Bhadrapad, Jupiter entered Leo. There was then a slight dispute over the question whether Jupiter was continuously in Leo for the whole year, i.e., Akandi or whether from Leo it went back by retrogression to Cancer and again entered Leo, i.e., it was Trikandi. The question assumed some importance as marriages usually are not recommended when Jupiter is in Leo. In any event a concession is granted that there is no bar to a marriage in Leo-Jupiter if celebrated on the banks of Godavari as all Gods have agreed to abide there at the time.

On the opposite side of Nasik is Panchavati and between them flows the river Godavari. The river starts from the hill Brahmagiri near Tryambak, about twenty miles from Nasik.

There are about sixty temples in Nasik which has the reputation of being the Kasi of this side. There are many reasons for this :—the holiness of Godavari, association of Nasik and Panchavati with Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, the vicinity of the Jyotirlinga of Tryambakeswara and the fact that Nasik was the second city of importance of the Peshwas. *Brahmapurana* devotes chapters 70 to 175 to Godavari and its Tirthas. Godavari is called Ganga of the South and also Gautami.

Nasik was known at least 200 years before Christ. One inscription at Bharhut of about 200 B.C. records a gift of Gorakshita of Nasik, the wife of Vasuka. Ptolemy mentions Nasik (150 A.D.). Jinaprabhasusi, a Jaina writer of

the 14th Century, wrote about Nasik as a Tirtha.

In 1680 the Deccan Viceroy of Aurangzeb destroyed twenty five temples at Nasik. It was under the Peshwa's rule (1750 to 1818) that most of the large existing temples were built.

The temple of Sundar Narayan is situated in the Aditya war Peth, facing the east. In the shrine there are three black stone images, the image of Narayan, three feet high, being in the centre and smaller images of Lakshmi, on either side. The building is so constructed that at Sunrise on 20th or 21st of March the Sun's rays fall at the feet of Narayan. In about 1750 Peshwa Balaji cleared the site of the old temple, sanctified the ground which was made a graveyard and constructed the present temple.

About fifty yards north-east of the Kala Ram temple is the Sita Gumpha or Sita's cave, very close to some very old and lofty banyan trees believed to have sprung from the five famous banyan trees of Panchavati. It contains the images of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in a large niche in the back wall. A door to the east leads to the Shrine of Mahadev. Behind the Mahadev shrine is a passage, now blocked, leading six miles north to the Ramsej Hill where Rama used to sleep. It was in this cave that Sita was concealed and was carried away by Ravana disguised as a religious mendicant.

The temple of Kala Ram or Sri Ramji in Panchavati is considered one of the finest modern temples in Western India. The whole temple is simple, elegant and finely finished. The temple is supposed to stand on the spot where Rama lived during his exile. It was built by Sardar Rangrao Odhekar in 1782. The total cost was Rs. 23,00,000. In the shrine on a beautifully carved platform stand images of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita of black stone about two feet high. The image of Rama has gold moustaches and golden

gloves. Ram Navami day is specially sacred and the festival is held for thirteen days in Chaitra. On the 11th of these 13 days there is Rath procession through the city.

Narusankar's temple, also called the Rameswara temple, is the richest and the most highly sculptured building in Nasik on the left bank of the Godavari. It is to the east of the Rama-Gaya Kunda in which Rama is said to have performed the Sraddha of his father Dasaratha. The shrine facing the west has the *linga* of Siva. The bell is six feet in circumference at the lip. The temple was built in 1747 by Narusankar Raja Bahadur of Malegaon at the cost of Rs. 18,00,000.

The Kundas or holy pools in the bed of Godavari are between the Sundar-Narayan steps and Muktesvara shrine. The water of the river passes through a narrow artificial gully called Tas or furrow. The first pool, about 40 feet to the east of the Tas is Lakshmana Kund. Then comes the Dhanush Kund. This leads to the Rama Kund 83 feet by 40 feet. This is the holiest spot in Nasik as it is believed that at this place Rama used to take his bath. Ten feet north of Rama Kund is Sita Kund.

Nasik, along with Prayag, Gaya, Pushkar, and Naimisaranya, is considered one of the great five holy places. Godavari takes a southern bend here and makes it specially holy. Seven other streams join Godavari near Nasik. The Brahma and the Asthivilaya or the bone-dissolving *tirthas* are situated here. Rama, Lakshmana and Sita passed several years of their exile near Nasik.

About twenty miles south-west of Nasik is the far-famed place of pilgrimage of the Jyotirlinga of Siva called Tryambakeswara. The fairs in this temple take place on the full-moon of Kartik and the 14th of the black-half of Magha. The present temple was built by Peshwa Balaji Bajirao on the site of the older but a much humbler shrine.

In Leo-Jupiter every twelve years the fair is held here for 13 months. *Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol. 16, p. 653 observes in a note tht this fair at every twelve years is so well-known that the word Godavari is ordinarily used in Gujarat for the numeral 12!

Govardhan town is about six miles west of Nasik. It occurs several times in the famous Nasik inscription of Ushavadata. It is noticed about twelve times in five inscriptions of about the beginning of the Christian era in the Pandu caves which are about ten miles to the south-east of the village. It was the headquarters of the district of the Andhrabhritya viceroy.

Tapovan or the forest of austerities is about a mile east of Panchavati. It has a famous shrine and image of Rama who is believed to have lived on fruits collected by Lakshmana from the forest. The magnificent banyan and tamarind trees are believed to be as old as the hermitages of the Rishis who performed their austerities here.

About five miles to the south of Nasik there are three isolated hills. The highest and eastern-most hill 3004 feet above the sea has a group of old Buddhist caves called the Pandu Lena caves (250 B.C. to 600 A.D.). The caves face north and north-east. Their northern frontage saves them from the sun and south-west rains and much of the rich carved work and many long and valuable inscriptions have remained unharmed through the last 2000 years.

In *Ramayana*, Panchavati is called a *desa*. Dandakaranya contained Janasthana and Panchavati was part of Janasthana.

In Kritayuga, Nasik was called Padmanagar, - in Treta it was called Trikantaka, in Dwapara it was called Janasthana and in Kali it is Nasik.

This Janasthana was the scene of Rama's exile.

Rama with Sita and Lakshmana came near this area.

He conversed with Sage Dharmabhrit about lake Panchapsaras. He then came to the hermitage of Sage Sutikshna. Four *yojanas* from that place was the Asrama of Agastya's brother. About a *yojana* south of it was Agastya's Asrama. Sage Sutikshan advised Rama to go and see the great Sage Agastya that very day. Rama started to offer his homage to Agastya. On the way he saw the forest trees with wild fruits and flowers, joyous elephants, monkeys, birds and deer moving fearlessly and giving out cheerful sounds. Rama at once guessed that the hermitage of the great sage was nearby. It was the halting place of pilgrims where they could shake off their fatigue. The forest was full of the smoke of ghee poured in sacrifice. It was the place of that sage who had conquered the south and made that area his own. Lakshmana went in, saw a pupil of Agastya and informed him of Rama's arrival. The pupil went in to the Agnisarana to inform the great sage with folded hands. The sage immediately asked the pupil to usher them in, adding that he ought to have brought them in straightaway. Rama together with Sita and Lakshmana entered the Asrama and what did they see inside? Quiet deer moving round about and the places in the Asrama of Brahma, Agni, Vishnu, Indra and numerous other deities. Surrounded by numerous pupils, the sage came forward to receive Rama. The sage was shining with lustre—the image of liberality and the abode of austerities.

एवमुक्त्वा महाबाहुरगस्त्य सूर्यवर्चसम् ।

जयाहापततस्तस्य पादौ च रघुनन्दनः ।

—*Ramayana*, Aranyakanda, 12, 24.

“Having pointed out to Lakshmana Sage Agastya who had the brilliance of the sun, the valorous Rama caught hold of the feet of the great sage as he came down to receive

him". Agastya gave Rama the bow of Vishnu, the arrow of Brahma, two quivers of Indra containing an endless supply of arrows and a divine sword. On Rama's request the great sage advised Rama to settle down in his exile at Panchavati forest about two *yojanas* from Agastya Asrama.

Dandakaranya is said to be situated between the Vindhya and the Saivala mountains. Manu's son Ikshvaku had 100 sons, the youngest being Danda. He was stupid and ruled badly. His territory was the country of Dandaka between Vindhya and Saivala with Madhumat as the capital. He made sage Usanas his *purohita*. Once while on a hunting expedition, Danda saw the beautiful unmarried daughter Araja of his *purohita* and preceptor Usanas. In this deserted place he ravished her in spite of her protestations and then returned to his capital. Sage Usanas, hearing of this heinous crime, was flaming with rage. He remarked that the king had caught hold of the flame of fire and burnt his fingers. He warned all the inhabitants of the country to vacate it and cursed that in seven days Indra would rain dust over the entire country of Danda and make it a jungle. This reminds us of the effects of a modern atom or hydrogen-bomb. He asked Araja who was unfortunately made Saraja by Danda to stay in the Asrama and perform a penance. Only that area was saved by Indra from dust-rain (*Ramayana*, Uttara Kanda 80-81; Padma, Srishti 34).

In this Dandakaranya, in the place called Janasthana, was Agastya's Asrama. Agastya and Vasishtha were sons of Mitra-Varuna through Urvashi. Once Agastya saw his ancestors hanging in a pit with heads downwards. On inquiry he learnt that it was because he was unmarried and without a son to release them from this particular torture. Agastya with his spiritual force created a very

beautiful lady, placed her with the king of Vidarbha and when she grew up he married her. She was Lopamudra, the most beautiful, learned and highly accomplished lady of the age. Agastya was reminded of his duty to his ancestors and approached her for a son. Her ideas of the standard of life were very high and so wisely she asked Agastya to acquire wealth before thinking of progeny !

यथा पितुर्गृहे विप्र प्रासादे शयने मम ।

तथाविवे त्वं शयने मामुपैतुमिहर्हसि ॥

Vanaparva, 95, 17.

"You deserve to approach me only after providing me with the same standard of life that I had at my father's house."

Agastya recognised her affection and started to accumulate wealth. He came to King Srutarvana and said, "Give me some wealth according to your capacity without violating any one's rights. The king showed his audited statement of accounts and the balance-sheet where there was practically no excess of income over expenditure. The sage did not wish to harm any one. Therefore he went to King Bradhnaśva. He too had no money. The sage then came to King Trasadasyu. He too had no money. The sage finally came Ilvala demon who received him. This demon used to kill people by feeding them his brother Vatapi cooked as a goat who then came out alive bursting their bellies. Agastya ate the goat and digested it striking his belly three time with his palm. Ilvala had to give him some wealth. Following on his treacherous attack on Agastya, the sage burnt him. Lopamudra was satisfied and the sage had an illustrious son called Dridhasya. (Vanaparva 94 to 97).

Godavari is also called Ganga and Gautami. Sage Gautama had his hermitage here on the Brahmagiri. He stayed with his wife Ahalya. No rain fell for years.

Gautama propitiated Varuna who gave him an inexhaustible pit from which Gautama produced sufficient crops. Other Rishis became jealous, pleased Ganesa and with his unwilling help arranged a ruse. A cow was sent into Gautama's granary and on Gautama trying to avoid her with a bunch of Darbha she suddenly died! Gautama was labelled a cowkiller, driven out of the Asrama and made to undergo severe austerities. He propitiated Siva who brought Ganga on the Brahmagiri to purify Gautama. Siva himself agreed to stay there in the form of the Jyotirlinga of Tryambaka. All the Gods came down and promised to come there every twelve years when the Jupiter was in Leo (Sivapurana, Kotirudra, 24 ff). Gautama turned the course of Ganga coming down there as Godavari or Gautami with a Darbha blade and so this place is known as Kusavarta. The date of the descent of Ganga or Godavari from the Brahmagiri Hill is given as Saturday the 10th of the bright-half of Magha—during the reign of King Mandhata. It is said that when Vishnu and Brahma went to see the end of Siva in the form of a column of light, Brahma came back with two suborned witnesses to prove that he had gone to the end. Enraged at this deception, Siva cursed Brahma that he would have no followers; Brahma in turned forced Siva underground when the Tryambak Hill rose up by 2000 feet.

It was at Panchavati that Rama passed some of his happiest years of exile.

तर्पयित्वाथ सलिलैस्तैः पितृकृन् दैवतानपि ।

स्तुवन्ति स्मोदितं सूर्यं देवताश्च तथानघाः ॥

कृताभिषेकः स रराज रामः

सीताद्वितीयः सह लक्ष्मणेन ।

कृताभिषेकस्तुवगराजपुत्र्या

रुद्रः सनन्दिर्भगवानिवेशः ॥

Ramayana, Aranyakanda, 16; 42, 43..

“With water libations they satisfied ancestors and Gods. They praised the rising sun and deities with Sandhya and Arghya. With Sita and Lakshmana, Rama bathed in Godavari. He appeared like Lord Siva with Uma and Nandi and having the Abhisheka of water”.

21. TIRUPATI

वैकुण्ठेन सहागतं परमिदं श्रीवेङ्कटाद्विस्थलं
पूर्वं ज्ञानवराहमूर्तिहरिणा भूम्या सहाधिष्ठितम् ।
लक्ष्म्याऽऽलिङ्गतरुपमद्यसगुणं कल्याणमास्तेदवचू-
रुद्धं ब्रह्म तदेव विश्वजननस्थेमव्यथानां प्रभुम् ।

—*Bhavishyottara Purana*

"At Venkatachala, Hari in the form of the Jnana Varaha first resided with Mother Earth. At this very place now abides Sri Venkatesa, the highest, along with Vaikuntha and embraced by his consort Lakshmi. This is the same pure Brahman which has assumed the auspicious Saguna form and is the Lord of Creation, protection and destruction of the universe."

TIRUPATI is situated in the Chandragiri Taluk of the Chitoor District. Tirupati town is 90 miles from Madras and about six miles from the Renigunta junction on the Southern Railway. It is accessible from the South *via* Katpadi.

Tirupati town is at the foot of the hill on which is the famous Venkatesa temple. The sacred spot on the hill about 2,800 feet above sea level is known as Tirumalai. The hill forms part of the Eastern Ghats and is also known as Venkatachala and Sesachala.

Tirupati, which is also the name of the Venkatesa shrine on the hill, is known in Tamil literature as Vengadam. It was considered as the northern boundary of the Tamil speaking country of which the southern boundary was Comorin or Kumari, according to the ancient, classical Tamil grammar *Tolkappiyam*.

It is said that the Eastern Ghats on this side along

with their curves, heights and falls resemble the serpent Adisesa and that the seven hills of Tirupati are its seven hoods. That is why Tirumalai is called Sesachala.

The Puranic legends say that Vishnu of his own choice came down to stay here for the benefit of humanity. This place is one of the most famous pilgrim centres in South India.

The legend of how Lord Venkatesa Srinivasa came to reside on the Sesachala Hill is repeated in numerous Puranas. Extracts from twelve Puranas have been published in 2 volumes as *Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam*.

Padma Purana, Uttara, 255 states that once Manu performed a sacrifice. A dispute arose among the scholars gathered there regarding the supremacy among Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The task of finding out the truth was entrusted to sage Bhrigu. First he went to Kailasa. Nandi did not permit him to go in. Somehow he secured admission but Siva was sporting with his consort Parvati and paid no attention to Bhrigu. Cursing Siva, Bhrigu came to Brahma. The latter did not even get up or receive him thinking that Bhrigu was after all his son. Cursing Brahma too, Bhrigu came to Vishnu. The latter was fast asleep. Bhrigu in his anger kicked him on the chest. Lakshmi who was also on the chest received part of the kick.

Vishnu got up and instead of being angry, inquired whether there was any injury to Bhrigu's foot, adding that he was justified in kicking, as Vishnu was asleep and thus negligent in his duty of protecting the universe! Bhrigu was pleased. The print of the kick on his chest was preserved by Vishnu as the Sri-vatsa sign.

Vishnu put up with Bhrigu's insult taking him to be a great sage but Lakshmi did not. As Vishnu was trying to shield Bhrigu, Lakshmi quarrelled with Vishnu and left him in disgust. It is said that Vishnu feeling lonely in Vai-

kuntha, came down of his own accord, to his Sesachala Hill to pass his time pleasantly. First he came here in the form of Adi Varaha carrying Mother Earth on his tusk and rescuing her from the deep ocean. After a long time and in order to please a devotee of His, Vishnu assumed the form of Srinivasa with Lakshmi on his chest and thereafter remained buried under the earth. Years after, the cows of a local king used to come here, milked of their own accord and returned home dry. The king came to know of it, discovered the underground form of Lord Srinivasa and placed the Lord in the now famous Shrine at Tirupati.

The local king who discovered the underground icon of Lord Srinivasa, it is said, was King Tondaman. It appears that in spite of the legendary character of the story, this Tondaman actually lived, and tradition places him between the Vikram and the Saka eras i.e. between 57 B.C. and 78 A.D.

The Prabandha of Four Thousand which celebrates the 108 places of Vaishnava worship and is the composition of the Alwars, mentions Tirupati and throws considerable light on its early history.

Alwars and Acharyas have sung passionately of Venkatachala and Srinivasa who is considered to be the most beautiful, kind and generous form of Lord Vishnu. In North India, Srinivasa is known by the name of Balaji. Not only have they sung about and undertaken pilgrimage of this Balaji; many of them were concerned with the development and worship of the shrine. Tirumalai Nambi devoted himself completely to the service of Srinivasa at Tirumalai; and it was the famous Ramanujacharya who visited Tirupati several times, organised the worship and reformed the rituals of the temple.

Numerous devotees including many kings have effected alterations, repairs and renovations to the temple and on

account of this, the temple has become a mixture of architectural styles. The late Chola, Vijayanagara and the modern styles are seen side by side. The earliest inscription available is dated 790 A.D. Vengadam or Venkatachala and its deity Srinivasa are traditionally taken to be Swamyambu existing from time immemorial.

As until the 8th century most of the references are to the Hill and the deity but not to the temples, it is believed that upto that time there might have been a small temple only to the deity.

It is said that a temple to the deity at Tiruchanur was built in about 826 A.D. as the Sesachala Hill temple was inaccessible to the devotees. About the time of Alavandar and his grandson Tirumalai Nambi, 960 A.D., the Venkatachala God was again brought over to his original place on the hill. Ramanuja enlarged the small temple and regularised the rituals.

One very curious thing about this Venkatachala deity is that in ancient literature the God has been described as one having both the features of Siva and Vishnu. Even the Alvars have described him as such and attributed to him some of the characteristic weapons of Siva. Some go to the extent of taking the deity to be the image of *Hari-Hara* in twin form. Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar states: "From the description by these Alvars one is likely to get the general impression that the image described is the image of *Hari-Hara*". Some stanzas imply Siva alone as the deity, others imply even Siva and Brahma as the deity.

In the time of Ramanuja the Saivites thought of the image as being the form of Siva and claimed that it was a Saiva temple. They had taken possession of the temple and disputes were going on between the Saivites and the Vaishnavas over the matter of this temple. Yadavaraja, the local ruler with his capital at Narayanavaram was ap-

proached for arbitration. He sent for Ramanuja from Srirangam to help him decide the question. Ramanuja came down as invited and the dispute was argued out in open court. The result as expected was inconclusive. Ultimately the weapons peculiar to Siva and Vishnu were placed before the Lord and after the doors were closed, the Lord was requested to assume any set of weapons he chose. The next day the Lord was seen with the weapons of Vishnu in his hands. One version is that Ramanuja intensely prayed the Lord: Another is that he as an Avatara of Adisesa, entered inside and placed them in the hands of the Lord.

In the famous Dwadasa Jyotirlinga Stotra of Sri Sankaracharya, there is the description of Mallikarjuna on the Srisaila mountain which is part of the Sesachalam Hills and Srisaila itself is used as a name for Tirupati.

Whatever the dispute, the conception of the Tirupati deity appears to belong to that age "when the dominant feeling was not sectarian—either [Saiva or Vaishnava—but a period of compromise when sectarianism had to be kept under control because of other enemies to overcome." Whether the deity was Para-Siva or Para-Vishnu—this supreme deity did contain within himself the forms of the other divinities of the Trinity.

Ramanuja succeeded in establishing the Tirupati temple as a Vaishnava Shrine and established the forms of worship according to the Vaikhanasa Agama. He repaired the Ananda Nilaya tower, placed a gold necklace containing the image of Goddess Padmavati round the neck of the God, and prescribed the upright face-mark (Urdhva Pundra) of the camphor mixture called "Pacchai Karpuram". All jewels were to be removed on every Thursday, and the deity was to be dressed only in flowers.

On this occasion Ramanuja also brought the Govindaraja image from Chidambaram and installed it in Tirupati Town at the foot of the hill. The young Chola monarch wanted to thrust this image into the sea and Ramanuja rescued it. Govindaraja image is in a sleeping posture on the Ananta or great serpent. Yadavaraja at the instance of Ramanuja installed it in a separate shrine erected inside the Sri Parthasarathi temple now called Sri Govindaraja Perumal Temple.

The Pallavas of Kanchi (9th century) the Pandyas of Madurai and the kings of Vijayanagar (14th-15th centuries) were devotees of Venkatesa. In the time of the Vijayanagar kings, the endowments and benefactions increased. The statues of Krishnadevaraya and his two consorts Chinnadevi and Tirumaladevi are to be seen even today. Many chiefs and nobles have paid homage at this temple. Raghoji Bhonsle made a permanent arrangement for its worship and presented a great emerald. Rulers of Mysore and Gadhwal also made handsome endowments. The shrine has remained untouched by Mohamadans since the time of Khilji; and Malik Kafur on his southwards journey seems to have taken a different route. The subsequent Muslim and English rulers took the temple under their protection. This is one of the few temples which has escaped the iconoclastic fury and retained its old and pristine glory even to this day. On account of the numerous endowments from rulers, nobles and the general public from all over India, the estates of the shrine have increased enormously.

In 1843 the East India Company divested itself of its direct management and handed it over to the head of the Hathi Ramji Math at Tirumalai. In 1933 the Madras Legislature gave the charge to the Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanam committee, which had the control through a

commissioner appointed by the Madras Government. In 1951 the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Act (Act 19 of 1951) was passed and the control was entrusted to a Board of Trustees and an Executive Officer appointed by the State Government.

Venkatesa is the family God of numerous families all over India, particularly in the South. People have great faith in the Deity and he is the great healer of all the ills and troubles of the faithful. A Hundi, a great repository or Golak is placed near the Golden Gate, the Bangaru Vakili, carefully guarded by the sentries, in which the pilgrims place their offerings on the fulfilment of their vows.

In the Garbhagriha, there is the image of the Deity of Lord Srinivasa, Venkatesa or Balaji facing the east. seven feet high, of black stone, with four hands. The image is an excellent one, very lovely and graceful. There are three Prakarams, the Mukkoti Pradaksini, the Vimana Pradaksini and the Sampangi Pradaksini.

Sundara Pandya (1262 A.D.) gold-gilted the Kalasa on the Vimana. Virā Narasimha Yadavaraya weighed himself in gold and made use of it in making the temple shrine like "the Suragiri of the Devas". Krishna Deva Raya visited Tirupati seven times. On one occasion he bathed the God in gold (Kanakabhishekam). His visits were mainly thanks-giving visits whenever he had achieved something very notable and satisfactory.

There is a shrine of Ramanuja inside the temple. Swami Pushkarini lake, it is said, was brought from Vaikuntha by Garuda for the sport of Lord Srinivasa. It is adjacent to the temple and a bath in it cures many evils and confers salvation. It is said to cure even madness.

Skanda records this story of Dharmagupta, son of

king Nanda. The latter in his old age adopted an ascetic life and left the kingdom to his son Dharmagupta. Once this Dharmagupta while hunting spent some time in a forest at night. A lion pursued him; so the king climbed a tree. A bear also resorted to the same tree out of the fear of lion who was sitting below, waiting to catch the prey. The king and the bear agreed to remain awake in turn, each for half the night and permit the other to sleep. First the king slept and the bear protected him, remaining wakeful. In spite of the lion's entreaties to drop the king, the bear remained faithful to its promise to the king. After mid-night it was the king's turn to be a watch over the sleeping bear. On the lion's entreaties the faithless king dropped down the bear as prey to the lion. The bear woke up, assumed the form of a yaksha and cursed the king to be mad as a penance for his heinous and criminal breach of trust. His retired father Nanda was informed of this. Ultimately they discovered the Swami Pushkarini lake and after a bath in it, it is said, Dharmagupta was cured of his madness which was due to the fact that

स्वाङ्गन्यस्तशिरःस्कन्धं ऋक्षं तत्याज मूतले

—*Skanda*.

"he had dropped on the ground the bear which was quietly and confidently sleeping, having placed its head and shoulders in the king's lap."

A pilgrimage to Venkatachala and a bath in Swami Pushkarini also cured sage Kasyapa of his evil. Even though he had remedies to cure king Parikshit of the serpent-bite of Takshaka—he did not go to cure him and on being bribed by Takshaka with jewels, he returned home from mid-way and Parikshit died of the serpentbite. Any one who has remedies must cure the sick and the injured till the last moment.

यावत्कण्ठगताः प्राणा मुमूर्षोर्मानवस्य हि ।
तावच्चिकित्सा कर्तव्या कालस्य कुटिला गतिः ॥

Skanda, quoting Ayurvedic authorities, gives this tip to doctors and Vaidyas. "So long as there is the slightest chance of life the dying man should be treated with proper remedies; for none knows the crooked ways of Kala". Kasyapa failed in his duty and he had to make amends.

At the foot of the hill, there is the Kapila Tirtha, also called the Alwar Tirtha. The Varaha-swami Temple is in a corner of the Swami Pushkarini. Papavinasana Tirtha is almost two miles. In Tirupati town the Govindaraja and the Kodandaramaswami temples are well known. Kapilesvara Shrine of Siva is $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the town. At Tiruchanur, there is the shrine of Padmavati, the consort of Venkatesa.

The different *poojas* and festivals are performed at Tirumalai according to schedules. Free Darsanas are available 3 times a day. For special *pujas* and festivals, pilgrims have to pay special fees and get receipts from officials.

The Devasthanam Committee and now the Board of Trustees are striving to improve the amenities and convenience for the visitors.

Tirumalai Tirupati Devasthanam maintains the Sri Venkatesvara Oriental Research Institute, 2 high schools, 2 elementary schools, an orphanage, a Patshala, Sri Venkateswara College, a poor home, a museum, and the transport service. Shri Venkateswara University has also been recently established.

The hill is held in great reverence. No shoes are worn on the hill. Flowers are all meant for the deity. Smoking, intoxicants, and non-vegetarian food are avoided.

Vasantotsava is held for 3 days (13th to 15th Chaitra Bright Half); Nityotsava for 40 days from the Telugu

new year's day in March; and Brahmotsava for 9 days in Āsvayuja Navaratra. Numerous other monthly and annual festivals are held.

The first verse of Ramanuja's *Sribashya* is a prayer to Srinivasa.

अखिलमुवनजन्मस्थेमभङ्गादिलीले
 विनतविविधभूतव्रातरक्षैकदीक्षे ।
 श्रुतिशिरसि विदीप्ते ब्रह्मणि श्रीनिवासे
 भवतु मम परस्मिन् शेमुषी भक्तिरूपा ॥

"May my intellect assume the form of Bhakti in Srinivasa, the highest Brahman, revealed in the Vedanta; the God who creates, protects and destroys the whole universe with sportive ease, and who has taken a vow to protect all creatures who seek him".

22. KHAJURAHO

अन्तर्नाडीनियमितमरुलङ्घितब्रह्मरन्ध्रं
स्वान्ते शान्तिप्रणयिनि समुन्मीलदानन्दसान्द्रम् ।
प्रत्यग्ज्योतिर्जयति यमिनः स्पष्टलालाटनेत्र-
व्याजव्यवतीकृतमिव जगद्व्यापि चन्द्रार्धमीलेः ।

"The Inner Light of the mooncrested Lord Siva in the yogic posture is victorious—the Light which has crossed the Brahma-Randra when the breaths are controlled in the Sushumna Nadi and after the internal organ has become tranquil; which is identical with the bliss which is revealed; which as it were has assumed the form of the third eye of the Lord in the forehead; and which pervades the Universe."

—Krishna-Misrayati's *Prabodha Chandrodaya*, 1-2.

KHAJURAHO, 24° 51' N. and 79° 56' E, is situated in the Chhatarpur District of Vindhya Pradesh, about sixty miles south-east of Harpalpur, thirtyfour miles south of Mahoba, twenty-seven miles east of Chhatarpur and twenty-five miles north of Panna. Khajuraho was the capital of the Chandellas, the rulers of the Bundelkhand known as Jejaka-bhukti. The Chandellas ruled over this area from the 9th to the 13th centuries. Khajuraho is famous for its magnificent collection of medieval temples.

In the inscriptions, Khajuraho, is known by the name of Kharjuravahaka. Tradition says that the city gates were ornamented with two golden *Kharjura* or date-palm trees. It is also stated that there were numerous *Kharjura* trees in the vicinity.

Chandella kings trace their descent from Sage Chandratreya who was born of the Moon. The first few princes of this line were not very important. They came in to power after the break-up of the Pratihara empire. Chandellas are one of the thirty-six Rajput clans. Nannuka (9th century) was the founder of this line. The first few rulers acknowledged the supremacy of the Pratihara emperors and were vassals of the Kanauj Empire. Nannuka was succeeded by his son Vakpati who had two sons—Jayasakti and Vijayasakti. Jayasakti was also called Jejaka or Jeja. After he succeeded his father, Bundelkhand over which this Chandella king ruled, was known as Jejaka-bhukti. Jejaka was succeeded by his younger brother Vijaya and he, by his son, Rahila. Mahoba or Mahotsava-Nagar was perhaps at that time a part of Jejaka-bhukti. Rahila was succeeded by his son Harsha and the latter by his son Yasovarman.

It was in the reigns of Harsha (900-925) and Yasovarman (925-950) that the Chandellas became a great political power. Harsha helped the Pratihara Emperor Mahipala I or Kshitipaladeva by establishing him on his throne. Yasovarman was also known as Lakshavarman. In his days the Pratihara empire was decaying and he became the "burning fire" of the Gurjaras. He vanquished the Chedi Ruler Yuvaraja I of Tripuri and the Malava Ruler Siyaka II. He also defeated the South Kosal king, invaded the country of the Palas and the Kambojas; also the Gauda and the Mithila.

Yasovarman conquered the mountain of Kalinjar and erected the excellent temple of Ramachandra or Lakshmana or Chaturbhuj at Khajuraho. The image was received from the Pratihara ruler Devapala. It was originally in Tibet.

Yasovarman was succeeded by his son Dhanga who

called himself Maharajadiraja. He ruled from 954 to 1002 A.D. and died at the ripe age of one hundred years. He carved out an independent empire for himself after defeating the king of Kanauj. His minister Prabhasa was a descendant of the famous founder of the Nyaya system, Gautama Akshapada. A great many number of temples at Khajuraho were constructed in Dhanga's regime.

Dhanga's grandson was Vidyadhara and he is described by Ibnul-Athir as a great Indian Ruler. After the raid of Kalinjar by Mahmud of Gazni in 1022, Chandellas paid more attention to Mahoba, Kalinjar and other strategic points with the result that Khajuraho's importance thereafter began to decrease. Al-Biruni mentions that in 1022 "Kajuraho" was the capital of "Jejahuti" i.e. Jejaka-bhukti. In 1098 Kirtivarman was the Chandella king and he patronised the great Sanskrit poet Krishna-Misrayati, the author of *Prabodha-Chandrodaya*—an allegorical drama wherein the author has established Sankara's Advaita philosophy and incidentally referred to other contemporary systems of thought.

In 1334 A.D. Ibn-i-Battutta states that there was a lake at Kajrao (Khajuraho) a mile long and around it there were temples and idols. Perhaps it was the same lake as the present Khajuraho sagar or the Ninora Tal. In the centre, says Ibn-i-Battutta, there were three domes, and Yogis with matted hair resided there. Their hair had grown yellow on account of their austerities, and even Muslims of these parts attended on them to learn magic. The place was undoubtedly a great religious centre. Sikan-dar Lodi partially demolished the temples there in 1494-5 A.D. and the importance of Khajuraho diminished gradually.

The early Chandella rulers were Vaishnavas and the later ones were Saivas. But all of them were very tolerant

towards other sects as is evidenced by the Jain temples and Buddhist relics.

Hiuen-Tsang visited the kingdom of Chi-chi-to (Khajuraho) and described it as situated about 167 miles north-east of Ujjain. As the only relic of Buddhism is a big image of Buddha with an inscription of the 9th century, it is believed that Buddhism had gradually disappeared from this area by the time of Chandellas.

Khajuraho at present is a small village at the corner of the lake of the same name also called Ninora Tal. Out of the numerous temples, there now exist only about twenty-five temples belonging to the 9th and 10th centuries. Their architecture is very fine and belongs to what is known as the Indo-Aryan style. These are magnificent structures with beautiful outlines and rich carving; the ornamentation displays unusual variety and delicacy. The cusped ceilings are particularly beautiful. In the elder temples, both inside and outside, there are elaborate sculptures. The only other temples with which the Khajuraho temples can be compared are those at Bhuvaneshvar in Orissa.

Khajuraho temples fall into three main groups. One is the western group, the second is the eastern group, and the third is the south-eastern group. The western group consists of Brahmanical temples, mainly of Siva and Vishnu. The northern group has mainly Vaishnava temples and the south-eastern group consists of Jain temples.

From the style of images and other evidence, the earliest temple at Khajuraho belonging to about 900 A.D. is the Chaunsat Yogini temple in the western group. It is to the south-west of the Sibsagar lake. It is built of granite. The courtyard 103×60 feet was surrounded by 65 cells.

To the north of this temple is the Kandariya temple

which is the largest extant temple of Khajuraho and is considered as typical of the style of architecture at Khajuraho in the 10th century. It is believed that this temple was not a temple to one God alone but was a Panchayatana temple with Siva in the centre. This shrines of the four other deities in the four corners are not extant. A full-fledged Khajuraho temple had the Ardhamandapa, Mandapa, Mahamandapa, Antarala, Garbhagriha, and Pradakshinapatha, and all these parts are distinctly designed in this temple. In the Garbhagriha there is the marble *linga* of Lord Siva.

There is another ruined Mahadev Temple nearby. It had a huge figure of Sardula which is now placed in the portico.

To the north of this is situated the Debi Jagadambi or Kali Temple. "In ignorance of its real character this image has been painted black and is worshipped as Kali. That it was dedicated to Vishnu is evident from the image of the deity covered over the entrance to the sanctum. It was a Panchayatana temple but the subsidiary shrines on the platform have all perished" (B.L. Dhama and S.C. Chandra).

Further north is the Chitragupta or the Bharatji Temple. It is dedicated to Surya and in the Garbhagriha there is the image of the Sun-God five feet high with heavy boots and a chariot pulled by seven horses. In the central niche to the south of the Garbhagriha is the image of Vishnu with eleven heads. The head in the centre is of Vishnu and the other ten represent his ten incarnations.

The Visvanath temple of Siva to the extreme north of this group is similar in plan to the Kandariya Temple. According to the inscription of 1002-3 A.D. the temple was built by King Dhanga for God Sambhu Marakatesvara and the Siva *linga* was prepared of emerald.

The Nandi Temple facing the Visvanath temple contains a very polished large image of Nandi, the Vahana of Siva.

South-West of the Visvanath Temple is the Parvati Temple.

The Lakshmana or Ramachandra or the Chaturbhuja Temple is dedicated to Vishnu and is of the Panchayatana type. The subordinate shrines are at the four corners. On the frieze about the lintel over the entrance to the sanctum are the carvings of the nine planets. Inside the sanctum there is a four-armed and three-headed image of Vishnu standing in a frame of Torana of elaborate carving. Of the three heads the central one is human, the other is of Varaha and the third is of Narasimha.

The Matangesvara Siva temple has a large Gauri-patta about twenty feet in diameter and four feet high and over it is the polished Siva *linga* about eight feet high. On the body of the Siva *linga* there are Persian and Nagari epigraphs in indelible in (Dhama and Chandra).

In front of this temple is a small Varaha temple with a colossal statue of the Primeval Boar 8' 9" in height.

The eastern group of temples contain temples of Brahma, Vamana and Javari.

A modern shrine of Hanuman contains a big statue of Hanuman with an inscription of 922 A.D., which is the oldest inscription discovered so far at this place.

The Brahma Temple, so called, which has a four-faced image on the pedestal has now been identified as a *linga* and the temple is assigned to the early group.

The Vamana Temple contains the image of the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu, 4' 8" high. Buddha in his Bhumisparsamudra is also carved as one of the incarnations on the framework.

The Javari Temple is dedicated to Vishnu. It is a small but well-proportioned and richly carved temple.

The Jain temples are situated on the south-east side. In architecture they are mainly similar to the Brahmanical temples. Brahmanical deities are depicted all over the Jain temples.

The main Jain temples are of Ghantai, Adinatha and Parsvanatha. The Ghantai is so called because it has an ornamentation of bell and chain on the pillars. The Parsvanatha Temple is the largest Jain temple in extant. The sanctum has a bull carved in front of it. It is, therefore, believed that the original image must have been that of the first Tirthankara Rishabhanatha. The image of Parsvanatha was installed in 1860 A.D.

On the southern side there is the Duladeo temple, a Siva temple. The Jatkari or Chaturbhuja Temple is dedicated to Vishnu.

To the south of the Matangesvara temple in the western group there is the Jardine Museum of Khajuraho built in 1910 A.D. and it contains a large variety of sculptures.

One stone inscription is to be found near the Vamana Temple in Nagari characters resembling those of the Yasovarman inscription of 1011 A.D. The stone inscription of Yasovarman of 1011 A.D. consists of twenty-eight lines and was found near the Lakshmanji Temple. It is in 49 Sanskrit verses composed by poet Madhava, the son of the grammarian Dedda. It records the erection of a temple of Vishnu called Vaikuntha by Yasovarman of the Chandratreya family. It traces his genealogy from Nannuka onwards. The first verse reads:—

“May that Vaikuntha protect you, who, frightening the whole world with his roaring, as boar and as man-lion, slew the three chief Asuras, Kapila and the rest, who were

terrible in the world and who possessed one body which by the boon of Brahma enjoyed freedom from fear and could be destroyed only by Vaikuntha having assumed these forms!" (*Epig. Ind. Vol. I, p. 130*).

Then there is a stone inscription of Dhangadeva of 1059 A.D. and rewritten by Jayavarmadeva in 1173 A.D. It records that Dhanga erected a magnificent temple of Siva with two *lingas*, one of emerald and the other of stone. He distributed great quantities of gold to Brahmins and established dwellings for pious people who were given gifts of land, grains, money and cows.

In this inscription composed by poet Rama, son of Balabhadra, Saraswati is praised in this way :

पशुपतिवदनच्छद्मनि पद्मसद्मनि सदा या ।

जयति विलक्षणरूपा शुक्लामा भारती भ्रमरी ॥

"In the mouth of Lord Siva which is the lotus, Saraswati abides like a female bee (which moves in a lotus) but she has a strange form, for this female bee (is not black in colour) but is white!"

The stone inscription at the Vaidyanath Temple of Siva in twenty-two lines is dated 1001 A.D. It records the erection of the Vaidyanath Temple by Kokkalla of the Grabapati family, some noble of Khajuraho. The name of the composer is not given. The first verse reads :

"I adore the adorable coil of matted hair carried by the beautiful Vaidyanatha, which is irradiated by the expanding terrible hoods of a multitude of hissing broad serpents; marked with the half-moon which is excessively shining, more brilliantly than the sun; and yellowish, when in contact with the line of flames of the fire issuing forth from his tremulous eyes." (*Epig. Ind. Vol. I, p. 150*).

The Panchayatana *Puja* was prevalent in Khajuraho. The five deities are Siva, Vishnu, Durga, Surya and Ganesa. The genius who originated this system is not really known

but many attribute it to the great Sankaracharya and some to Kumarila. Many believe it to be of still earlier origin. In this list of five deities, Brahma has no place. The system evidently started after the worship of Brahma fell in the background. Panchayatana really means the Panchayat of the Gods and it is only a representative meeting of the large Hindu pantheon. One is left free to have his chief deity placed in the centre and then the other four are placed in the four corners. All five deities have each one Atharvasirsa Upanishad in praise of that deity. This system has encouraged tolerance and has also brought home the Vedantic idea that one and the same Absolute can have numerous forms and that all forms ultimately lead to the Upanishadic Brahma alone.

One feature of the Khajuraho sculptures is the presence of a number of figures in indecent poses. This feature has invited some strong and bitter comments. It is true that the ideas of art of the earlier period were more in keeping with modern notions and the art which these sculptures represent had different notions, not particularly pleasing to certain modern notions of art and decency. But these sculptures needs not necessarily be taken merely as base representations of sensuousness in stone. They are in sacred temples held in universal esteem by the age in which they were depicted and there is bound to be some higher and esoteric purpose. The Tantric literature has mystic diagrams, esoteric mantras, Nyasas and Mudras. There is a strange mixture of high and low, great discipline and yogic height as well as what appears to be moral laxity. It is only the Diksha or the initiation from the Guru by which one is supposed to acquire the true, mystical, esoteric meaning of the apparently senseless and then alone can one be released from the *Pasas* or fetters of the *Pasu* (All jivas are called *Pasus*). In the spiritual ladder, this *Pasu*

has to cross three stages—that of the Pasu or the normal man, the Vira or the heroic man and Divya or the divine man. This was a kind of discipline and whatever its vulgar forms and degenerations, the idea undoubtedly was to lead the spiritual aspirant from one stage to the other beyond all worldly attractions, sensuousness and the sense of duality. One has to go beyond likes and dislikes. In this process a number of attractions are placed before him and he is expected to pass them by. The criticised figures at Khajuraho are in line with similar Tantric ideas prevalent in that age. This Tantra literature included the profound and mystical doctrines of the Saiva, Vaishnava and Sakta sacred literature. The Buddhists and Jains too had their own Tantric manuals.

Poet Rama in Dhangadeva's inscription dated 1059 A.D. opens his composition with

विष्टपविकटवटानां अजायमानाय बीजरूपाय ।

रुद्राय नमः पालनविलयकृते निष्क्रियायापि ।

“Namaskaras be unto Rudra, who is unborn and yet is the seed of the complex Vata trees in the form of these worlds; who protects and absorbs them into Himself, though He is actionless.”

23. KAMAKHYA OF ASSAM

कामदा कामिनी कामा
कान्ता कामाङ्गदायिनी ।
कामाङ्गनाशिनी तस्मात्
कामाख्या तेन चोच्यते ।

Kalika Purana 64-2.

"The Goddess is called Kamakhya as she is the yielder of all desires, the young handsome bride of Siva, the giver of both Bhukti and Mukti."

THE celebrated shrine of Goddess Kamakhya is situated about three miles from the present town of Gauhati in Assam. The name of the hillock on which this temple stands is called the Nilachala or the blue mountain. The origin of this Sakti Pitha is thus described in the *Kalika Purana*.

Sati, the consort of Siva, went to the sacrificial session of her father Daksha and on account of the discourtesy shown to her husband Siva, she gave up her life in vexation. Siva, coming to know of this, was overcome by grief; and carrying the dead body of Sati on his head, started wandering about. All were frightened at this sight. In order to pacify Siva, the Gods approached Vishnu and it was deemed necessary to remove the dead body from Siva's head. With the help of his discus, Vishnu cut the dead body into fifty-one pieces and all of them fell in different parts of India. The genital organ of Sati fell on the Kamagiri i.e. the Nilachala hill near Gauhati. All the fifty-one places where pieces of Sati's body fell became famous as Sakti Pithas and Kamagiri in Kamarupa or Assam became famous as the Pitha sacred to the Goddess who being on

Kamagiri came to be known as Kamakhya, the fulfiller of all desires.

The hill represented the body of Siva himself and when Sati's genital organ fell upon it, the hill became blue in colour. The Goddess is also called Kamakhya because she used to come here secretly with Siva to satisfy her *kama* or amour. This hill is therefore described both as the love-resort as well as the grave of Sati. *Kalika Purana* aptly says that she is *Kamangadayini* and *Kamanga-nasini* which terms also mean that she is "the giver of Bhukti or enjoyment and Mukti or liberation".

Assam's early history is very closely interwoven with the name of this Goddess Kamakhya who represents a composite picture made up of several conceptions of the Goddess at different epochs in history.

This shrine is held in great veneration all over India and frequented by numerous pilgrims. This Goddess is the specially favoured deity of Assam and Bengal.

Ancient Assam has been frequently mentioned in the Puranic and Tantrik literature as Kamarupa. *Devi-Bh'gawata*, *Kalikapurana* and the *Yogini Tantra*, particularly the last two works, describe the Goddess Kamakhya in great detail.

Kama-rupa's boundaries are thus described in the *yog ni Tantra*. "From the Kanchana mountain of Nepal to the junction of River Brahmaputra; from Karatoya to Dikkaravasini. In the north there is Kanjagiri, on the west is the river Karatoya. Oh Daughter of Himalaya! On the east is river Dikshu, the best of the Tirthas, and on the south is the confluence of Brahmaputra with Laksha. This area is known as Kamarupa according to all Sastras".

This temple to Goddess Kamakhya is peculiar in as much as it contains no image of the Goddess. Within the temple there is a cave and in one corner of it there is a

stone on which is sculptured the symbol of the Yoni of the Goddess. There is a natural spring within the cave by the oozing water of which this stone is kept moist. Offerings of flowers and leaves are made on this symbol. In other respects the rites, ceremonies and rituals are similar to those of the Goddess Kali. In animal sacrifices, female animals are exempted.

Through the heart of the Assam state flows like a big artery the great river Brahmaputra which is also called in Sanskrit literature Sri Lauhitya. Raghuvamsa states (in 4-8) that when Raghu crossed Lauhitya or river Brahmaputra, the then Lord of Pragjyotisha i.e. Kamarupa, trembled with fear.

चक्रम्पे तीर्णलौहित्ये तस्मिन् प्राग्ज्योतिषेश्वरः ।

Pragjyotisha was the capital of ancient Assam. *Kalikapurana* gives the derivation of the name in this way: "It was at this place that Brahma stood and (Prak) created in the past the various stars and planets (Jyotishas) and therefore this city, which is like Indra's capital, is called Pragjyotisha".

अस्य मध्ये स्थितो ब्रह्मा प्राङ् नक्षत्रं ससर्ज ह
तेन प्राग्ज्योतिषाख्येयं पुरी शक्रपुरीसमा ।

Gait says that the city may be taken to be a city of Eastern Astrology. To the east of Gauhati there is a temple dedicated to the nine planets.

Assam is racially and linguistically homogeneous. Its language is an Aryan dialect of great antiquity. Hiuen Tsang reports in the 7th Century that it differed a little from the language of Mid-India. Assam's early contacts with Aryan India are copiously referred to in *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Modern Assamese as an Aryan speech has developed out of Sanskrit and it is estimated that it is as old as the 10th Century A.D.

The word Assam is variously derived. It is connected with the Shan invaders of the 13th century. It is also derived from the Sanskrit word "Asama" i.e. "peerless" or from the Tai root "cham" i.e. "to be defeated", and Acham or Assam would mean "undefeated".

Kamarupa is so named according to the legend because Siva had burned Kama or cupid for having disturbed him in his penance but that Kama eventually regained his original form or Rupa here in this country and therefore this country is known as Kamarupa.

Kalikapurana (10th century) and the *Yogini Tantra* (16th century) are believed to have been composed in or near about Assam. *Kalika Purana* states that Naraka who was brought up by King Janaka of Mithila came over to Ancient Assam and after he became its king and was placed in charge of the Goddess Kamakhya, the name of the country was changed from Pragjyotisha to Kamarupa. It is clear that King Naraka brought a new cult of Sakti and appropriately renamed the country as Kamarupa.

In *Mahabharata* and *Harivamsa*, Naraka has been described as son of the Earth. At the request of his mother he had been given the Vaishnava missile which he in due course transferred to his son Bhagadatta. Subsequently Naraka imprisoned 16,000 virgins, and became a tyrant. Krishna killed him on Naraka-Chaturdasi or the 14th day of the black half of Asvin. His son Bhagadatta participated in the great Mahabharata war and sided with Duryodhana. Dronaparva 29-17 says that Bhagadatta actually sent out the Vaishnava Astra or missile in the war and fought with great valour. He was killed by Arjuna. His two sons were Kritaprajna and Yajnadatta. Kritaprajna was killed by Nakula.

A further legend says that Naraka in association with king Bana of Sonitapura degraded himself, became in-

different to the worship of Kamakhya, insulted Sage Vasishtha and was cursed by that sage and that this brought about his downfall and death.

Anyway it may be presumed that Naraka brought the Sakta cult to ancient Assam. From the mass of details regarding the life of Naraka he is rightly believed to have lived. Dr. Kakati concludes that Naraka was a political adventurer from Mithila who established himself as a power somewhere between 200 to 500 A.D. and introduced the Sakti cult and found in the local Goddess Kamakhya a manifestation of divine energy.

Though certain features in the Sakta cult were due to foreign influences, the Sakti cult in general is the indigenous cult of India. The legend of *Kalikapurana* of the fifty-one pieces of the dead body of Sati falling over various parts of the country all over India is an attempt to define the boundary of the Aryan India where the Sakti cult was prevalent. It is something like Manu's definition which says that wherever the black antelope roams that is the sacred land of Aryavarta. And in the prosperous days of Tantras, the Sakta cult was prevalent throughout the length and breadth of India, from Himalaya which was the birth place of Parvati to Kumari, a place of Sakti worship; from Kamakhya in the east to Dwaramati and Prabhasa in the west.

Kalikapurana gives an amorous interpretation of the origin of this Yoni Goddess Kamakhya, while the *Yogini Tantra* gives a different account, stressing the creative symbolism of the Yoni. Dr. Kakati suggests that these two different views of the two scriptures may perhaps embody views of two different sets of people professing that cult at different periods of time. For the second view the legend is that the supreme creative force of Brahma was successfully challenged by the Goddess. Brahma could

thereafter create only through the blessings of the Yoni as the sole creative principle. After penance and purification Brahma brought down a luminous light from the sky and placed it on the Yoni circle. For the good of Brahma and of the world the Yoni-circle was created by the Goddess and placed at Kamarupa.

Kalikapurana says that the Goddess has three different aspects according to her three moods.

In her Kama or amorous mood she holds a yellow garland standing on a white lotus. In her dreadful mood she takes up a sword and stands on a white corpse; in her Kamada or benevolent mood she rides a lion. Further she can have endless forms according to her desire and is therefore known as Kama-rupini.

The original temple of Kamakhya was destroyed in the Muslim invasion early in the sixteenth century. The present temple was re-built in 1665 A.D. by King Nara-Narayana, the Coach King of Coach Bihar who equipped it in the same manner as it was before.

Kamakhya is called Lalita-kantika. "There is no lady in the three worlds who can match her in beauty. Therefore she is called Lalitakantika" (*Kalika Purana*, 83-66) Siva alone cannot grant any boon without the approval of this Parvati.

Kamakhya is further identified with Tripura.

शृण्वन्तं त्रिपुरामूर्तेः कामाख्यायां प्रपूजनम् ।

—*Kalika Purana*, 66-50.

"Please hear ! Goddess Tripura is to be worshipped as Kamakhya" Tripura is adored in three aspects of Tripurabala, Tripurasundari and Tripurabhairavi.

One aspect of Tripura was Tripura Bala and she could be worshipped both according to Dakshina Achara and Vama Achara. Kamakhya herself was worshipped accord-

ing to both these Acharas. Kamrupa is the favourite haunt of this Goddess and here she dwells in every house. "Every woman is a miniature incarnation of the Goddess and every sinless person, of Siva."

Most of the rites which show aberration of doctrine and practices have come from outside. Sabarotsava is believed to have come from the Sabaras in the Vindhya Hills. The local religion of the Kiratas who were conquered by Naraka also partially influenced the practices among a certain section.

In the north-east frontier of Assam is a small river Dikrang, sankritised as Dikkaravasini. The dreadful aspect of the Goddess on this side as well as the epithets Ugratara, Ekajata, etc., are believed to be of Buddhist origin. This dreadful aspect in the form of Tamresvari of the Copper Temple dominated in the later history of Assam for a few centuries.

Dr. Kakati writes, "The Goddess of the Copper Temple Tikshnakanta, Ekajata or Ugratara is a Buddhist Goddess and said to be imported into the Buddhist Pantheon from the country of the Bhotas by Nagarjuna (in the 7th century). So was Tara also of Tibetan origin (B. Bhattacharya; *Buddhist Esoterism*, p. 154)."

Tantra represents literature which spreads knowledge and is derived from the root *Tan* to spread. The word was applied to the sacred literature of Saivas, Saktas, Vaishnavas, Sauras, Ganapatyas, etc. The composition of their special texts is believed to date from the 6th century A.D. Sakti Tantras are believed to be 64 in number, Saiva 18 and Vaishnava 108; but actually many more texts are available in each group. The Tantric cult whether of the Saktas, Saivas, Vaishnavas or any other deity has several features in common. There are mantras or prayer formulae, the Bijas or mystic syllables peculiar to each deity,

Yantras or diagrams, mudras or special positions of fingers, Nyasas or placing the deity within one's self through the different parts of one's body with the help of finger tips, the Guru or the Preceptor, and Diksha or the initiation. Tantras are open to women and Sudras also. They became popular with every section of the population including the highest castes. These Tantra Acharas were classified into seven sub-divisions—the Vaidika, Vaishnava, Saiva and Dakshina Acharas—all named as Dakshina Achara; the other three being Vama Achara, Siddhanta Achara and Kaula Achara. The first four observe strict social morality. Vama Achara and the other two introduce a new technique to be practised in secrecy. This and the other two were intended to be practised only by the strictly disciplined, self-controlled and qualified few who were in possession of the esoteric knowledge; but in the hands of misguided, sensuous and perverse followers this became an instrument of lewd practices. In what is considered as the highest or the Kaula practice, there are counted many eminent Yogins of the Buddhist and the Natha Sampradayas.

Kamakhya is one of the most celebrated places of Sakta worship. Among the five famous and sacred Sakti Pithas are counted Odiyana (identified with Kashgarh, or Swat valley, or Orissa or Western Assam), Jalandhara (in Punjab, Purnagiri (near Poona or in Assam), Matanga (Srisaila) and Kamakhya of Assam. Some texts give prominence to Arubuda also.

By about the tenth century various influences mingled together to bring out a Tantra which was a composite whole and coloured by the Brahmanic, Buddhist and the Nath influences. The Tantra literature grew with some of its said seven Acharas finding favour in certain parts and others in the other parts of the country. Nyasas and

Mudras became part of the daily sandhya of every Brahmin and Dwija.

The Saktas are to be found throughout India and their cult is largely prevalent in Bengal and Assam. "The Saktas are more allied with the Northern Advaita Saivas than with the others, though in them also there is worship of Sakti. Siva and Sakti are one and he who worships one necessarily worships the other. But whereas the Saiva predominantly worship Siva, the Sakta predominantly worships the Sakti side of the Ardha-Narisvara Murti, which is both Siva and Sakti" (Sir John Woodroffe). A common philosophical basis of Saivas and Saktas is the doctrine of thirty-six tatwas. *Sarada-Tilaka*, the great authority among Bengal Saktas is the work of Lakshmanacharya of the Kashmir Saiva School. The Saiva and Sakta doctrines are based on the Vedanta or the Upanishads and they lay down the Advaita principle of the unity of Jivatma and Paramatma.

Regarding Vamachara, Sir John Woodroffe observes that its secret Sadhana is not usually understood; that it has acquired such notoriety that to most of the people the term 'Tantra' connotes this particular worship and its abuses and nothing else. He adds that it is a mistake to believe that aberrations in doctrine and practice are peculiar to India; that Kaula rites are philosophically based on monistic doctrine and that just as charity covers many sins, so "mystic" and "mysticism" are words which cover much ignorance about the Tantra which is contemptuously spoken of in ignorance as a jumble of black magic, erotic mysticism, meaningless mummerly etc. Even if some of the rites and practices of a section are to be rightly condemned as debased, the huge tantric literature which has ennobled the entire population of India for centuries by its noble

thoughts, devotion and yoga does not deserve to be wantonly vilified.

Some of the most important Tirthas of Assam were Siddhesvari, Apunarbava, Urvasi, Manikarnikesvara, Pandunatha, Kamakhya, Asvakranta, Hayagriva, etc.

It has been observed that Buddhism underwent radical changes from the latter part of the 7th century A. D. and developed certain mystic cults known as Mantrayana, Vajrayana and Tantrayana. These systems gained some ground in Assam which was noted for its Tantric Saktism. Some of the monks of the Buddhist Vajrayana were known as Siddhas who are counted as 84 in number. Luipa known as Miunatha or Matsyendranatha, according to Tibetan tradition, came from Assam.

Though the Sakta cult is not the child of Assam it had its nourishment here. Winterneitz observes that from the 8th century onwards Tantrism proceeded from this territory in veritable triumph to Tibet and China. Most of the customs and practices which are absorbed into the rituals of Sakta and Saiva cults are said to have come from Assam which was a frontier region with all kinds of uncanny beliefs and superstitions (B. K. Barua). Of the four Pithas Kamakhya, Srihatta, Purnagiri and Uddiyana which are also associated with Buddhist Tantric worship Kamakhya and Srihatta at least belong to Assam. The fusion of Buddhism and Hinduism in Vajrayana and Mantrayana is believed by some scholars to have taken place in Assam and from here it spread to Tibet.

The Dakshina Achara according to which Kamakhya is worshipped is strictly in accordance with prescribed rites and rules of the society. The Goddess likes the colour red. In the extreme Achara it may signify the blood of an animal which is sacrificed. In the Dakshina Achara the colour red

symbolises love. Sri Sankaracharya writes in his *Saundarya Lahari*.

A devotee who contemplates on heaven and earth as steeped in your brilliant red light of love issuing from this your luminous body of the Goddess like the light of the rising red sun—of that devotee are enamoured an endless number of heavenly damsels including *Urvashi*, with eyes like those of frightened forest deer.” This *Sadhana* aptly says that if you love the world, the world is bound to love you and repay your love.

तनुच्छायाभिस्ते तरुणतरणिश्रीसरणिभिः

दिवं सर्वा उर्वी अरुणिमनि भग्नां स्मरति यः ।

भवन्त्यस्य त्रस्यद्वनहरिणशालीननयनाः

सहोर्वश्या वश्याः कति कति न गीर्वाणगणिकाः ।

24. CHIDAMBARAM

धराधरेन्द्रनन्दिनीविहासबन्धुबन्धुर—

स्फुरद्दृगन्तसन्ततिप्रमोदमानमानसे ।

कृपाकटाक्षघोरणीनिरुद्धदुर्धराषदि

क्वचिच् चिदम्बरे मनो विनोदमेतु वस्तुनि ।

"May I find happiness in your Being, located in Chidambaram i.e. Tillai (or the ether of inner consciousness)—you whose mind is gladdened by the loving side glances of the daughter of Himalaya and you whose merciful eyes dispel our insufferable miseries."

—Ravana Krita, Tandava Stotra.

CHIDAMBARAM is the headquarters of the Taluka of the same name in South Arcot District, Madras and is famous for its great Siva temple. For some time it was the capital of the Cholas. It is situated on the Coleroon river, 21 miles from Cuddalore and 151 miles from Madras. The Chidambaram Saiva temple is one of the most venerated, reputed and one of the oldest temples of South India. Chidambaram is also known as Tillai, Perumpattapuliur, Pundarikapuram, Vyaghrapuram, Srirambalam and Chitrakuta. This temple is held in great veneration throughout South India and Ceylon and the annual festivals held in December and June are very largely attended. Devotees from all parts of India come here for the Yatra all the year round. Tradition says that in the South there are five Sivalingas corresponding to the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind and ether. The Prithvi or earth linga is located at Kanchi. The Ap or Water linga is at Jambukesvara. The Tejas or fire linga is at Tiruvannamalai.

The Vayu or wind linga is at Kalahasti. The Akasa or ether linga is situated at Chidambaram.

The temple buildings at Chidambaram cover an area of 39 acres. There are five principal Sabhas or halls and two principal temples. Besides there are shrines to Vishnu and Ganesa. It is said that the image of Ganesa in the Ganesa temple is the largest image of that Deity in India. The Ghidambaram temple buildings are considered as an architectural feat. The stand on an alluvial plain between two rivers where there is no trace of building stone in a locality of 40 miles ; while practically the whole area of the temple including the 1,000 pillars, gateways, water-tanks with numerous steps etc., is constructed of stone. This is enough to give an idea of the labour involved and more particularly of the devotion of those who participated in its construction.

The main temple contains the idol of Siva as Nataraja i.e., in his dancing aspect and behind this idol and separated from it by a veil there is that great Akasa or the air lingam which is the real secret of Chidambaram. In fact there is no linga or we can say there is an invisible linga of Akasa. The veil is removed on special occasions when Puja is performed. Tradition is that Nataraja has emerged from this sacred space which is the invisible Akasa Linga. There is also a Chakra or Rahasya on the wall behind the image of Siva Natraja. The Lord is said to have danced in the presence of his two devotees—Vyaghrapada and Patanjali in the Chit Sabha.

Legend says that sage Vyaghrapada was collecting flowers for Lord Siva at Chidambaram, running here and there. Human legs had their limitations and the sage was not feeling happy. The Lord blessed him by granting him the feet of the tiger so that the sage could roam and run swiftly from place to place without fatigue and could

daily collect flowers for the Lord to his heart's content.

Sage Pantanjali is taken to be an incarnation of Adishesha.

It is stated by Kongadesa Rajakal that Vira Chola Rayar one day saw Siva the Sabhapati of Chidambaram, along with Parvati, dancing and beating the Damaruka. He therefore built the Kanaka or the Golden Sabha for the Lord; and that his grandson Arivarideva (985 A.D.) built Gopurams, enclosures image-houses and sabhas and also donated jewels to the deity.

Inscriptions say that the Chola King Parantaka I (907 to 953 A.D.) provided the Nataraja Shrine at Chidambaram with a golden roof. Uttama Chola (953 to 957 A.D.) is considered the author of a hymn to Chidambaram temple. Fergusson believes that the inner original temple existed at least in the 10th Century A.D. He assigns the Parvati Temple, the great Gopurams and the second enclosure to the 14th century. The north gopuram is ascribed to Krishna Deva Raya about 1520 A.D. and the east gopuram has inscriptions of Sundara Pandya of about 1250 A.D. The hall of 1000 pillars (the real number is 984) is believed to have been constructed between 1595 and 1685 A.D.

Tradition says that the principal temple of Siva was re-built or enlarged by Hiranya Varma Chakravarti who was originally called Swetavarma because he suffered from leprosy. He is to have come down to the South on a pilgrimage from Kashmir about 500 A.D. and was cured of his leprosy after he took a bath in the Sivaganga tank at Chidambaram Temple.

In the Carnatic wars, Chidambaram had become a place of strategic importance. In 1753, the French occupied it. Hyder Ali improved its defences and placed a garrison of 3,000 men in this temple. In 1781 Sir Eyre Coote attacked

the temple but was driven off. Coote wore out a brass 18-pounder gun in trying to break the walls.

Regarding this temple Fergusson says "Although this temple has been aggregated at different ages and grown by accident rather than design, like those at Tiruvalur and Srirangam, it avoids the great defects of these temples, for though like them it has no tall central object to give dignity to the whole from outside, internally the centre of its great court is occupied by a tank round which the various objects are grouped without at all interfering with each other". Portions of the architecture in the Chidambaram temple are considered as gems of Dravidan Art.

East of the Sivaganga tank is the Hall of 1000 pillars 340 x 190 feet. The Nritha Sabha is ornamented with elegant and graceful dancing figures. The Kanaka Sabha which is the dancing hall of Lord Nataraja is covered with golden roof. There are four big gopurams in four directions, the north and south ones being 160 feet high. The Sivaganga tank is 175 x 100 feet with a nice colonnade around it. The Temple of Parvati or Sivakami Amman has a remarkable porch. Near the Parvati temple is a temple to Subrahmanyn. There is also a Ganesa temple. In the inner Prakara there is the temple of Govindaraja Perumal i.e. of Vishnu who is said to have witnessed the dance of Siva Nataraja.

The towers on the east and west have carvings of the 108 dances corresponding with the 108 modes of dance as described in the Natya Sastra of Bharata. Below each of these dances is engraved its description as given in the Bharata Natya Sastra.

Lord Siva is represented here in his great and celebrated aspect as Nataraja, the King of Dancers. This dance of Siva is said to represent 'the primal rhythmic energy'. The world itself is a theatre or stage.

जगत्त्रयं शाम्भवनर्तनस्थली
 नटाधिराजोऽत्र परः शिवः स्वयम् ।
 सभा नटो रङ्ग इति व्यवस्थितिः
 स्वरूपतः शक्तियुतात् प्रपञ्चिता ॥

"The three worlds are but the dancing hall of God Siva. The king of dancers is the Supreme Siva Himself. The audience, actors and the stage are all evolved and elaborated by the Lord from His own self in association with His consort Sakti or Uma."

—*Soma Stavaraja*, Verse 40.

Dance represents energy, rhythm, harmony and orderliness. The harmonised rhythm of the Universe is best indicated by symbolic dance. In this sense we can imagine the Sun, Stars and all other deities too as dancing along with this King of Dancers, Lord Siva.

The *Amsumad-Bheda-Agama* says:—

"There are 108 varieties of the dance of Siva of which only the nine varieties are being described". Of these principal nine varieties, the one at Chidambaram and several other Siva temples is very common.

Sri Gopinatha Rao summarises the Agmic description of this pose on p. 224 of -Vol. 2 Pt. I of *Elements of Hindu Iconography*. The image is prepared according to the "*Uttama Dasa Tala*" measurement. It has four hands and two legs. The front left hand is in the *dandahasta* or *Gajahasta* pose across the body and the back left hand carries *Agni* in the palm. The front right arm is in the *Abhaya* pose. On the front arm of this hand is the *Sarpa Valaya*. The back right hands holds a *Damaru*. The right leg is slightly bent and placed on the back of the *Apasra-puru-sha*. The left leg is lifted up, somewhat turned towards the right leg and kept across it. On the head of the Lord is the *Jata-mukuta* with flowers, snake, jewels, skull and the

crescent moon—with several jatas whirling in the dance. The Lord must have a Yajnopavita and an Uras-Sutra. The face should be smiling. Saffron paste is applied on the chest and the rest of the body is milky white with ashes. The garment of the Lord is the tiger's skin. The *Apasmara-purusha* has his head on the right side of the Lord. He is black in colour and plays with a snake.

The Agamas say that to the left of Nataraja should be his consort Parvati and on his right there should be either Sage Bhringi or Bhadrakali.

This variety of dance is known as the *Bhujanga-Trasa* pose. Sri Gopinatha Rao quotes *Abhinava-gupta's* commentary on Bharata's *Natya-Sastra* which says: "This kind of dance is called *Bhujanga-Trasa* because in it the dancer suddenly lifts up his leg as though he discovered a snake very near him and appears to be of unsteady gait."

Around the figure of this dancing Siva there should be a *Prabha-mandala* resembling the orb of a sun. The eyes of Siva should be in the shape of the *Kurari* bird. In the right ear there should be *Nakra-Kundala* and in the left ear there should be *Patra-kundala*.

This mystic dance of Siva is given a very profound interpretation. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy in his excellent book "The Dance of Siva" and in the article of the same title has given several interpretations. This dance represents the five activities or the Panchakriyas (1) *Sristi*, creation (2) *Sthiti*, preservation (3) *Samhara*, destruction (4) *Tirobhava*, veiling or illusion and (5) *Anugraha*, grace. The learned Doctor quotes *Unmai Vilakham* verse 36. "Creation arises from the drum; protection proceeds from the hand of hope; from fire proceeds destruction; the foot held aloft gives release", and adds that the fourth hand points to the lifted foot, the refuge of the soul. Tirumular's *Tirumandiram* is then quoted. "Chidambaram is

everywhere, everywhere His Dance." This dance of the Lord takes place in the heart and the Self of every individual. Siva is the destroyer and He destroys the *Pasas*, or fetters which bind each individual soul like a Pasu. The burning-ground or the *Smasana* where the Lord dances is the heart and what is burnt is the ego, illusion and Karma.

This dance of Siva is meant to keep up the life of the Cosmos and help seekers of liberation in achieving it. The dance is also identified with the Panchakshara mantra of Lord Siva "Namah Sivaya". Both this *mantra* and the dance are identified with the Pranava Mantra "Aum".

The *Prabha-mandala* or the Tiruvasi is the dance of the Prakriti; Siva dancing within and touching it is the Purusha. Between this Purusha and Prakriti stands the individual soul just as "Ya" stands between "Siva" and "Namah".

"The grandeur of this conception is a synthesis of science, religion and art...its appeal is universal to the philosopher, love and the artist...This is poetry but none the less science." (Dr. Anand Coomarswamy).

The Lord at Chidambaram was the family deity of the Cholas. At Madura the Pandyas had the Rajata-Sabha. To out-do them, the Cholas had the Kanaka-Sabha for the Lord. The Nattukottai Chetties have again covered the temple with gold and restored the temple buildings at considerable cost. The temple is managed by a sect of Brahmins called Dikshitaras who perform the puja in turns.

This temple has been held as very sacred by the Saivites from ancient times. Even in the 7th century in the times of the Saivite Saint Sambandhar, the temple was famous.

The four great Saiva Samaya Acharyas or saints who represent the four main paths of Saivism are all connected

or associated with Chidambaram. The paths of Charya, Kriya, Yoga and Jnana are represented respectively by saints Appar (600-681 A.D.) Sambandhar (644-660 A.D.) Sundarar (between 710-735 A.D.) and Manikkavachakar (660-692 A.D.). These paths are also known as Dasa, Satputra, Saha and Sanmarga paths respectively.

Appar and his younger contemporary Jnana Sambandha flourished in the 7th century. Appar was born in a rich Vellala family in the South Arcot District. He was first converted to Jainism but when he got rid of an acute colic pain on praying to Siva, he became a firm devotee of the Lord. His old Jain friends wanted to claim him back and it is said that numerous attempts were made on his life but with the Lord's grace he escaped every time. At Chidambaram he met Sambandhar. Appar lived for 81 years according to tradition. Out of 49,000 hymns which he is said to have composed, only 311 are extant. His hymns are full of ripe wisdom. A loin cloth was his only dress and he used to remove rubbish from the temple doors.

Sambandhar only lived for 16 years. His extant hymns are 384. Once as a child he accompanied his parents to a temple tank. While they were immersed in the water, the boy looking at the sky cried out for his parents and the legend says that Siva and Parvati heard his prayer as universal parents and Parvati gave him milk. This gave him the necessary Jnana and he came to be known as Jnana Sambandhar. Even though much younger, he became a friend and associate of Appar whom he met at Chidambaram.

Manikkavachakar was born of Brahmin parents and became Prime Minister of the Pandya king. After meeting his Guru at Tirupperundurai, he dissipated the treasures of the king in his charge for his guru, for which act he was punished and dismissed. He felt very happy. He

composed numerous hymns which were so touching that they were considered words of Manikya or gem. He preached the doctrine of Love to the Lord. At Chidambaram he had his penance and here he also defeated a group of Buddhists. Legend says that when he was asked to explain the meaning of his hymns he only pointed to Lord Nataraja and then disappeared in a blaze of light. He is the author of *Tiruvachakam* and it is said that if a man's heart cannot melt on reading it, it will melt with nothing else and it is veritably a stone.

Sundarar only lived for 18 years. Only a hundred of his songs are extant. He came of a family of temple priests but was brought up by the king of the land. When he was about to be married, a Brahmin came on the scene, claimed him and took him away. Legend says that this was Siva Himself. He renounced the world and came to Chidambaram, where he had a divine message to go to Tiruvarur. Here he married a great Saiva devotee a non-brahmin lady Paravai. He became blind for having broken his promise not to cross the limits of a village where he remarried. He prayed to the Lord intensely and in due course both his eyes and mental peace came back to him.

Out of the 63 saints whose account is given in the *Periapuranam* Sage Nanda and Tiru-Nila-kanda-nayanar are closely associated with Chidambaram. Nanda was a Pariah. He very much respected the caste rules and yet desired to have the Darsana of the Lord. The Lord is said to have asked the Nandi, whose image came in the way, to move aside so that Nanda might have the Darsana. Even now the Bull at Tiruppangur temple is not in its proper place. He then came to Chidambaram and purified himself by passing through fire. The other sage while he was once passing by the house of a dancing girl created suspicion in the mind of his wife. This led to a domestic quar-

rel. Ultimately Lord Nataraja intervened, they were asked to bathe in a tank, and the misunderstanding was thereafter removed.

The nine kinds of Dances are described in Agamas, of which the Nataraja at Chidambaram is the *Bhujanga-Trasa* variety. Besides these Sri Gopinatha Rao has mentioned and illustrated the Katisama dance, the Lalita dance and the Tala Samsphotita dance. The famous Siva-Pradosha Stotra from the *Skanda Purana* refers to the daily evening dance of Siva at Kailasa in which all Gods participate. It is said that for the removal of poverty, Siva in this aspect should be resorted to. Ravana's Stotra refers to the Tandava dance of Siva.

Mahimna Stotra, verse 16, describes the Dance of Siva which envelopes the entire Universe. The Lord dances to delude the wicked as also to protect and benefit the virtuous.

मही पादाघाताद् व्रजति सहसा संशयपदं
पदं विष्णो भ्राम्यद्भुजपरिघरुण्यहगणम् ।
मुहुर्धौ दौस्थ्यं यात्यनिभृतजटातडितटा
जगदरक्षायै त्वं नटसि ननु वामैव विभुता ॥

"By the pressure of your feet when you dance, the earth begins to shake. By the impact of your encircling long hands moving like iron beams, the firmament with its stars and planets is overtaken with fear. The heavenly region is struck by the whirling locks of your matted hair. And yet you are dancing for the protection of the Universe! How strange and extraordinary seem the ways of this supreme Sovereign!"

—*Pushpadanta's Mahimna
Stotra*, 16.

GLOSSARY AND INDEX

- AJANABHA VARSHA**—Same as Bharata Varsha. XXIII, XIX, XXI.
- ALAKANANDA**—It rises beyond Badarinath and joins at Badarinath. It begins with a waterfall called Vasu Dhara at its source. This and Mandakini form the River Ganga. 139, 142, 145, 150.
- APPAR** (600 to 681 A.D.)—He was a Jain at first. He became a Saivite on the influence of Tilakavatiyar, his sister. He even defied Mahendravarman, King of Kanchi. (600-630). He was the first Saivite Adiyar who began composing poems in praise of Siva. He was the first of the Nayanars. His successors, Sundarar, Manikkavasagar, Tirujnana-Sambandhar and Nakkirar have written and sang in praise of Siva. 70, 213.
- ARASUR** (Mt. ABU)—Probably near the ancient Vasisthasrama. S. W. of Aravalli Hills. It is near the source of R. Saraswati, which is said to be the great Vedic river referred to in the Rig Veda and seems to be flowing at three different places and disappearing in the sands. 24°-45'N 71°-45' E. 113, 114, 116, 117, 118.
- ARAVALI RANGE &**
- ARBUDA PARVATA** (Mt. ABU)—A range lying in the N. E. by direction between 25° and 28' N and 73° and 76' E. Mt. Abu is a peak near the S. W. end.
- AYODHYA**—27°-10 N 82 E. Capital of Ancient Kosala. The headquarters of the Kings of Solar race. It is a place of pilgrimage. 69, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83.
- ANDAL**—Another of Vaishnava Alwars. She was the daughter of Periya Alwar. She decided to marry God Vishnu. She has composed Tiruvaimozhi (Tiruppavai) 71.
- SRI ANAND COOMARSWAMY**—Author of the "DANCE OF SIVA" etc. 211.
- ASWALAYANA**—Name of the author of Celebrated ritual work.—The Aswalayana Grihyu Sutas. 23.

AURNAVABHA—Another commentator of Vedas preceeding Yaska. 32, 35.

BADARINATH (Badari)—In Gharwal (U.P.). A peak of main Himalayas. Near it is the Tapta Kunda, a hot spring. A month's journey north of Hardwar and 55 miles N. E. of Srinagara (Badarivisala). Region round Badari is known as Vaishnava Kshetra. It has five Badaris—Visala Badari; (Badari Narayan) Yoga Badari (Pandukeswara); Bhavishyad Badari (Animath); Vriddha Badari; and Dhyana Badari near Silang. At Badari there are five thirthas. Rishi Ganga; Kurmadhara; Prahladadhara; Tapta Kunda and Narada Kunda. Panchasilas at Badari—Narada Sila, Varahasila, Markandeya Sila, Nrisimha Sila and Garuda Sila.

A little north of Badari on the right bank of river Alakananda is Brahma Kapala.

30°-44'N 79°-32' E and 10,284 feet above sea level. 45, 105, 119, 125, 134, 135, 138, 139, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 152.

BANA—A celebrated poet (seventh century) who lived in the court of King Harshavardhana (1st half of the 7th Century). He was the author of Harsha-charitra and Kadambari. 21, 67.

BENDIGERE—Copper plate inscription of 1249 A.D. wherein Pundarika Kshetra and Vithoba are referred to. 95.

BHAVISHYOTTARA—One of the eighteen puranas attributed to Sage Vyasa. This treats of the future in Kali age. A portion of it is Panduranga Mahatmya and describes Panduranga's image 94, 173.

BHAGAVATA—One of the eighteen puranas dealing with Universe and Avataras of Vishnu. It has twelve Skandhas—xiii, xix, xx, xxii. 53, 85, 87, 88, 92, 93, 114, 115, 117, 146, 147, 150, 151 196.

BHARATA VARSHA or **BHARATA** (India)—Bhagavata has it that Manu's great grandson Nabhi became King of the Continent and it was then known as Nabhi

Varsha, and Nabhi had a son (incarnation of Lord) Rishaba Deva. His successor was Bharata and from him this land came to be known as Bharata Varsha.

2. Dushyanta's son Bharata also seems to have had a part in giving the name Bharata Varsha. XVII, XIX, XX, XXI

BHARAVI—A Sanskrit poet of the sixth century A.D. He is the author of *Kiratarjuniya* 71, 140.

BHASKARA RAYA—(Bhasurananda Natha) 17th Century poet and a great author of Sakta and Tantric works. He is the author of *Lalita Sahasranama* *Bashya*, *Varivasya Rahasya*, *Setu Bandha* and about 15 other works. He was initiated by his Guna Sivadatta Sukla of Surat. 122.

BHASA—A Sanskrit dramatist ; a predecessor of and respectfully referred to by Kalidasa. He is the author of '*Swapnavasavadatta*' '*Pratijna Yaugandharayana*' and several other dramas. 62.

BUDDHISM—A religion founded and preached by Buddha in the sixth century B C. 89.

BRAHMA KAPALA—A little north of Badari on the right bank of Alakananda is Brahma Kapala. There pilgrims perform *Shradha* and offer *pinda* whereby the *pitris* are said to be liberated. 144.

BRAHMAPUTRA—A river rising in the Tibetan table-land south of Manasarovara and flowing east as R. Tsanpo and bending at the end of Himalayas curving round the E. Himalayas and flowing west as Brahmaputra. It joins Ganges. It flows through the N. portion of Assam. It is also called *Lauhitya*. XXVII. 195.

BRAHMANDAPURANA—One of the eighteen puranas attributed to Vyasa. XVII, 69, 72.

BRAHMA PURANA—One of the eighteen puranas ascribed to Vyasa. XXVI, 41, 47, 164

BHUVANESHWAR—20°-10' N-85°-50' E between Cuttack and Puri in the delta of Mahanadi. It is a spot with many medieval temples. 186.

CHAMOLI—Another stage on the way to Badarinath prior to Vishnuprayag. 136, 142, 150.

CHIDAMBARAM—A place of pilgrimage on the S. Rly. in South Arcot Dt. between Villupuram and Mayavaram, on the bank of the Coleroon, the northern branch of R. Cauvery after it divides itself at Kunasekaram. 206, 207, 212, 213, 214.

CHAITANYA—Famous saint of Bengal. 16th Century. He propagated the Bhakti cult of Krishna. He had a good following. 91.

DELHI—29° N 77 E. The capital and the headquarters of the Indian Union. It is a railway Jn. A few miles to the South is Indraprastha and a few miles to the North is Hastinapura and Kurukshetra. 67.

DEVAPRAYAG—A place next to Rishikesh on the way to Badarinath from Haridwar. 136, 142.

DEY. N. L.—Author of the geographical dictionary of ancient and Medieval India. 54.

DEVI BHAGAVATA—A purana extolling the Mahatmya of Devi. 117, 118, 138, 146.

DURGASHANKAR SASTRY Author of Gujaratna Tirthasthano and other works. 54, 55.

DHANUSHKODI—12 miles from Rameswaram on the East. At this point Rama broke his own bridge to allay Vibhishana's fear of further invasions by others if the bridge existed. 11.

DHARASU—One of the halting places on the way to Kedar from Haridwar. 136.

DWARAKAA—22°-20' N 69 E. on the N. W. extremity of Saurashtra peninsula. It is a famous place of pilgrimage and Lord Krishna was supposed to have created it and lived there with the Vrishnis and Yadavas. This is identified with Kusasthali. 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 69, 81, 86, 119, 150, 152.

FYZABAD—26°-50' N 82°-15' E. Rly. Jn. on the N. R. U. P. on the bank of river Sarayu. Four miles from Ayodhya. 77.

GANDHAMADANA—A peak of Himalayas and part of Rudra-Himalayas. $30^{\circ}45'N-79^{\circ}15'E$ 136, 139, 160.

GANGA—A sacred river having its source in the N. Himalayas and flowing in a southerly direction for about 500 miles and flowing eastwards for another 1000 miles, flowing into the Bay of Bengal. XIII, XXII, XXIV, XXV, XXVII, 3, 5, 114, 136, 150, 153, 170.

GARUDA GANGA—One of the stages before reaching Badarinath. 142, 150.

GARUDA PURANA—One of the Puranas ascribed to Vyasa. XIV.

GAYA—A sacred place for *Sraddhas*. At Buddhagaya, it is also a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists. 192 miles from Calcutta. XXIII, XXIV, XXVII, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 166.

GODAVARI—River rising in Brahmagiri in the western ghats. $18^{\circ}32'N-71^{\circ}30'E$ and flowing through the Deccan tableland. Sage Gautama propitiated Siva and brought Ganga there which was known as Gautama. XXIII, XXIV, 171.

SRI T. GOPINATHARAO—Author of "The Elements of Indian Iconography" etc. 208.

GAURIKUND—A holy place for bath on the way to Kedar from Haridwar. 136.

HANUMAN CHATTI—One of the stops on the way to Badarinath from Haridwar. 136.

HARIVAMSA—It is a Purana by itself and forms a supplement to the Mahabharata and ascribed to Sage Vyasa. 50, 198.

HARADWARA—Also called Haridwar. In the Saharanpur District in the U. P. on the Southern Himalayan slopes on the banks of river Ganga. It is a pilgrim centre. Kumbha Mela is celebrated here when Jupiter is in Aquarius (Kumbha). It was called Gangadwara. 27, 69, 81, 136, 138.

HASTINAPURA—The capital city of Kuru Desa on the banks of river Ganga in its upper course. 25.

HELANG CHATTI—One of the stages before going to Badari from where we proceed to Hanuman Chatti-142.

HEMADRI—An oft-quoted famous author of Chaturvarga Chintamani (1260 A.D.)

He has also written on the Tirthas. 95. †

INDRAPRASTHA—South of Karuland, modern village of Indraprastha on river Yamuna, part of old Delhi. It was in the Khandava forest which Pandavas cleared and on which they constructed this city. 17, 67.

JALANDHARA—A town near the western bank of Sutlej (Punjab) ; one of the famous Sakti Peethas where her breasts fell when she was carried by Siva. 117, 202.

JAMBUKESWARAM—10°-40' N 78° - 20'E. Two miles north of Tiruchirapalli in Madras State. This has a temple of Siva. It has the *Ap Linga*, one of the Panchalingas. 71.

JAMNOTRI—The source of river Yamuna. 136.

JINAPRABHASURI : A jain author of the 14th century. Author of Vividha Tirthakalpa. 164.

JAIPUR—26° N 75° 30' E Capital of the old Jaipur State. Now in Rajasthan. 67.

JOSHIMATH—A stage on the way to Badarinath. Here Sri Sankaracharya established one of his four principal monasteries. 142.

JYOTIRLINGAS—Twelve Jyotirlingas of Siva are famous. Views differ on the identification of some of them. 2.

JNANESWAR (1275-96)—The famous Maharashtra Saint, Bhakta and the founder of the Bhagawata cult in Maharashtra. He was influenced by Nath Samparadaya originated by Matsyendranatha. Author of *Jnaneswari* and other works. *Jnaneswari* was written in A.D. 1290. 97, 98, 99.

KABIR—A disciple of Ramananda, a devotee of Vishnu. He was a Muslim and weaver by profession. 45.

KALIDASA—The celebrated author of *Abhijnana Sakuntala*, *Vikramorvasiya*, *Malavikagnimitra* (Dramas) and *Kavyas* like *Kumarasambhava*, *Mekhaduta*, *Raghuvamsa* and others. He is also said to be the author of *Nalodaya*. There is still a controversy as to his date whether it is 56 B.C. or 544 A.D. 48, 61, 62, 67.

KANAUJ—27°-5' N 79°-55' E in U.P. on the western bank of *Kalinadi*, 6 miles north of its confluence with *Ganga*. It was *Harsha's* capital-185.

KATHGODAM—A stage on the way to *Kedar* from *Haridwar* and *Rishikesh*-136.

KASIKHANDA—It deals with the *Mahatmya* of *Kasi*. xvi, xvii, xxviii, 2.

KAMAKHYA (Assam)—The celebrated temple of Goddess. *Kamakhya* in *Assam*; is about three miles from *Gauhati*. 195, 197, 200, 202, 204.

KALIKAPURANA—One of the *Sakti Puranas*, describes *Saktipeethas* which are differently stated to be 52 or 72 or 108. The legend says that *Sati*, wife of *Siva* was insulted by her father *Daksha* in the *Yajna* and she immolated herself. *Siva* in delirium started dancing carrying her dead body on his shoulder. *Vishnu* cut the body into several parts. They fell at several places making those places sacred. 117, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200.

DR. P. V. KANE—Author of *History of Dharmashastra* in five volumes and other works. 37.

KANCHI—13° N 79° E *Madras*, 56 miles S. W. of *Madras* city. It was one of the seats of Learning ranking with *Takshasila*, *Nalanda* and *Ujjain*. Other names: *Kachchippedu*, *Kachchi*, and *Kanchipuram* 54, 59, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 81.

KASI—Other names *Avimukta*, *Varanasi*, *Ananda Kanana*, and *Mahasmasana*. 25°-15' N 82°-20' E. A place of pilgrimage on the S. bank of river *Ganga*. It is said to be the capital of *Siva*. It has the temple

of Viswanatha, one of the twelve jyotirlingas.
54, 67, 69, 81, 129.

KIRTINAGAR—Next to Devaprayag on the way to Badarinath from Haridwar. 136.

KULASEKHARA—Raja of Kerala. Was a devotee of Vishnu (Ranganatha). He was one of the Alwars. Author of Mukundamala. 131.

KUMBHARIA—Inscription 1200 A.D. of Dharavarshadev of Arbuda recording the construction of Vay (Tank) in Arasur. There are Jain temples at Kumbharia. 116.

KURUKSHETRA—North of Delhi and east of Ambala. It is near Thaneswar. Vedic river Saraswati disappeared here and therefore this place is called Vinasana. It was here that the Pandavas and Kauravas fought their immortal battle which the Pandavas won in the end. xv, xix, xxiii, xxvi, 15, 113, 153.

KEDAR—Kedaresvara, one of the twelve jyotirlingas of Siva is situated here in the Himalayas at the height of 11735 ft. in 30°-41' N and 70°-6' E in Patti Malla Kaliphat in the Nagpur Pargana. Sri Sankaracharya is said to have died here. 73, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139.

KUMBHAMELA—A religious festival held at Prayaga, Nasik, Ujjain and Haridwar every twelve years when the Jupiter (Brihaspati) is in Taurus, Leo, Scorpio and Aquarius respectively. Legend has it that nectar split from the Nectar-pot fell at these four places when Brihaspati tried to escape with the pot from the Asuras 27-138.

KURMA—A Purana ascribed to Vyasa. 33.

KRISHNA MISRA YATI—Author of Prabodha Chandrodaya. 183, 185.

LATE DR. S. KRISHNASWAMI AYYANGAR—Author of S. I. History of the Cholas and many other books on History. 176.

KHAJURAHO—24°-51' N 79° 56' E. In Chhatarpur Dt. of Vindhya Pradesh. It had gates ornamented

by Golden Palm trees. 183, 184, 185, 186, 190, 191, 192.

LAKSHMI DHAR (1100 to 1130 A.D.)—Author of the vast digest on Dharma Sastra called *Krityakalpataru* including *Tirthakalpataru*. 55, 138.

LOKACHARYA (PILLAI)—See Pillai Lokacharya.

MADHVA (1199-1278) A.D.—A Vaishnavite Philosopher (Canarese) and teacher who commented on the *Brahma Sutras* and propounded the *Dwaita Philosophy*. 126.

MADURA—9°-55' N 78°-5' E in South India on the southern bank of river Vaigai. It was the Capital of the Pandyas. It has temples of Meenakshi and Sundareswara. 48, 212.

MAGADHA—An ancient country roughly between 21 to 25 N and 84 to 88 E, south of river Ganges. Jarasandha of puranic fame flourished here. It is modern Bihar west of Bengal and south of river Ganga. 53, 86, 87.

MAHABALIPURAM 12°-50' N 79°-30' E was a flourishing port on the Eastern coast of Madras (56 miles) during the time of Pallavas 597-700 A.D. It has stone temples made out of rock. They form the first of its kind in India and are in exquisite sculpture. These were done under the personal supervision of Mahendra Varman I 600-630 A.D. and Narasimha Varma Pallava 630-678 A.D. 71.

MAHABHARATA—The great epic of India written by Vyasa. XIII, 9, 18, 19, 23, 32, 33, 80, 87, 105, 114, 134, 147, 148, 149, 197, 198.

MANDAKINI—Western Kali or Kaliganga rises in the Kedar Peak and flows S.E. wards and joins Alakananda at Badari 139.

MATHURA—27°-39' N 77°-10' E on the bank of river Yamuna, a place where Lord Krishna was born. It is one of the seven places of pilgrimage which assures liberation. 53, 67, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93.

- MATSY PURANA**—One of the eighteen puranas ascribed to Sage Vyasa. XXVII, 25.
- MANIKARIKA**—One of the famous ghats at Banaras. (Kasi) See Kasi. 3.
- MANIKKAASAGAR** (660-692 A.D.)—A successor to Sundarar in spreading Saivism. See Appar. 70.
- MAYA**—30° N 70°-50 E. at the foot of the Himalayas. It is the same as the present Haridwar. It is on the bank of river Ganga. 54.
- MUNDAKOPANISHAD**—One of the principal Upanishads. 148.
- MULA NAKSHATRA**—One of the twenty-seven constellations of the Hindu Zodiac. This is the 19th Nakshatra 83.
- NAKKIRAR**—One of the sixty-three Nayanars who propagated the saivite faith. 70.
- NAIMISA**—XVIII, XXVII, 6, 15, 153.
- NAMBI-ANDAR-NAMBI**—One of the Saivite Saint who collected the poems composed by his predecessor-Nayanars and made it compulsory for people to recite them in temples and homes. They form 11 books known as Tirumurai and Puja in Siva Temples in the South is conducted according to that. 70.
- NARASIMHA MEHTA**—Famous Gujarati Saint and Poet of the 15th Century. 57.
- NARAYANOPANISHAD**—One of the leading Upanishads. Gives Narayana Gayatri. 142.
- NARADIYA**—One of the Puranas. 33, 43.
- NARAYANA BHATTA**—Author of the 16th Century who influenced the Moghul Ruler in 1569 A.D. to sanction Renovation of the temple of Visweswara at Kasi. Famous author of numerous works including, Trishthali Setu, dealing with the importance and sanctity of pilgrimage to Prayaga, Kasi and Gaya. See Trishthali Setu. xiv, 3,
- NASIK**—20°-4' N 73°-45' E. L. on the Eastern slopes of the Western Ghats, on the banks of river

Godavari, near its source. Kumbha Mela occurs here when Jupiter is in Leo. Near it is the Jyotirlinga of Tryambaka. 27, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167.

NATHAMUNI—A Vaishnava Acharya, a predecessor of Ramanuja prior to Yamunacharya. 125, 127.

PADMAPADA—A disciple of Sankara who wrote a commentary on Sutra Bhashya. Only a part of it known as Panchapadika now survives.

PADMAPURANA—One of the 18 puranas ascribed to Sage Vyasa. xxvii, 33, 62, 95, 114, 155, 161, 174,

PADUKESWAR—One of the stages leading to Badarinath near Hanuman Chatti. 142.

PANCHAKROSI—A pilgrimage of five Krosas around Kasi and such other holy places. 3.

PANCHAVATI—Opposite to Nasik on the banks of Godavari is Panchavati. Here Rama is said to have lived when in exile, and whence Sita was lost. There is the Sita Gumpha cave where there are images of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana. 165, 171.

PANDHARPUR—17°-30 N 75°-50 E on the banks of River Bhima (Chandrabhaga) a tributary of R. Krishna on the North Bank. It is a place of pilgrimage where Vishnu is worshipped in the form of Vithala or Vithoba or Panduranga, worshipped all over Maharashtra. He is always remembered with Rakhumai, his consort. 94, 95.

PARGITER (F.E.)—Author of Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, Dynasties of the Kali age and other works. 54.

PATANJALI—The celebrated author of the Mahabhashya on the Vyakarana sutras of Panini (Aphorisms in Grammar); also a philosopher and traditional author of Yoga Sutras (5th Cent. B. C.) 62, 87, 163, 208.

PANINI—The famous author of Vyakarana Sutras. 5th Cent. B.C. 62, 87, 148, 163.

PILLAI LOKACHARYA—Leader of the Tengalai Sect of Vaishnavas. 130.

- PIPAEMOTI**—On the way to Badarinath from Haridwar. 142.
- FUSALKAR A.D.**—Author of "Bhasa" and other works. 54.
- PURI-JAGANNATH**— $19^{\circ}-50' \text{ N } 85^{\circ}-50' \text{ E.}$ It is famous for the shrine of Jagannath (an incarnation of Vishnu). 41, 43, 45, 47, 92, 119, 129, 152.
- PESHAWAR**—Now in Pakistan, was the old capital of Kanishka. ($33^{\circ}-50' \text{ N } 71^{\circ}-50' \text{ E.}$) (Purushapura) 79.
- PEYALWAR**—One of the twelve Alwars who propogated the Vaishnava cult in the Tamil land. He has composed poems in Tamil in praise of God Vishnu. 70.
- PONGAI ALWAR**—One of the twelve Vaishnava Alwars. He has composed poems in Tamil in praise of God Vishnu. 70.
- PRABHASA**—XVI, XXVII, 153.
- PRAYAGA**—XX, XXVII, 15, 33, 166.
- PRAGJYOTISHA**—Kamarupa or Assam. 197, 202, 204.
- PTOLEMY**—The famous Geographer of Alexandria 90 to 168 A.D. 61, 164.
- RAGHUNANDANA**—Author of *Smṛti Tattva* including *Puruṣottama Tattva*. 141.
- RADHAVALLABHIS**—A Sect of Vaishnavas. 91.
- RAMANANDA**—A Vaishnava Bhakta of the 14th Century.
- RAMAYANA**—The great Indian Epic of Sage Valmiki treating of the story of Rama. 82, 105, 163, 168, 169, 197.
- RAMESWARAM**—Town on the Rameswaram island at the S. E. Land's end of India. It is nearly 100 miles from Madurai. It is on the sea shore. Twelve miles E. is Dhanuskodi. Rama is said to have established and worshipped here the Jyotirlinga of Rameswara when he returned from Lanka. 9, 152, 166.
- RAMANUJA**—(1017 to 1137 A.D.) A great Vaishnavite reformer who propounded the School of Visishtadwaita Philosophy. He was third in the line of

Acharyas. Nathamuni was the first known Vaishnava Acharya. His grand son was Yamunacharya. And Ramanuja was the grand son of Yamunacharya through his grand daughter. Ramanuja is said to be an Avatara of Adishesha.

He was the author of Bhashya on Brahma Sutras, Vedantasara, Vedantadeepika, Gita Bhashya, Vedarthasamgraha etc. 45, 58, 126, 128, 129, 130, 177, 178, 182.

RIGVEDA—The prime scripture of the Hindus. The first of the four Vedas. 15, 23, 32, 42, 76, 78, 81, 88, 113, 134, 147, 155, 159, 161, 162.

RISHIKESH—A place near Haridwar and on the way to Badari and Kedar. 136, 142.

RUDRAPRAYAG—A place on the way to Badarikasrama from Haridwar and next to Srinagar. 136, 142.

RUPA—He and Santana were brothers; they were the pupils of Chaitanya and leaders of the Brindaban Community. They flourished in the 16th Century. 91.

RAIVATAKA—21°-40° N 70°-50' E. Girnar, a hill south of Dwaraka. 54.

SAMANTA—**PANCHAKA**—These are five pools at Kurukshetra made holy by the *Pitris* after Parasurama had propitiated them. Parasurama to avenge his father's death at the hand of Kartavirya Arjuna killed Kshatriyas for 21 times and gathered their blood in five pools. After Parasurama had fulfilled his vow the *pitris* absolved him from the sin of killing Kshatriyas and converted these pools into Holy pools. 18.

SAMBANDAR (c. 44-660 A.D.) (Tirujnana Sambandhar)—He was a boy prodigy born dumb but sang forth the praise of Siva when his mother took him to the temple. He followed Manikkavachakar as the tradition says. See Appar. 70, 71.

SANKARACHARYA (788 to 320 A.D.)—The celebrated Adi Sankara was the reformer who revitalised Hinduism. He preached Kevala Adwaita, established

four maths at four centres; he travelled widely and defeated in argument the rival schools. Sankara has written Bhashyas on the Upanishads, Brahma Sutras, Gita, Vishnu Sahasranama and numerous Stotras. 126, 138, 142, 177, 205.

SANATANA—See Rupa. He and Rupa wrote several books. He was the pupil of Chaitanya. 91.

SARASWATI—A river meeting the sea during Rigvedic times. But Mahabharata describes it as lost near Kurukshetra. This was perhaps due to volcanic action. It rises from Plaksha Prasravana in the Siwalik range. In Ramayana it is mentioned as a tributary of Ganga and joining it at Prayaga. xxii, xxvi, 113, 114, 118, 157.

SARAYU—A tributary of Ganga. Ayodhya the capital city of the Kosalas was on the west bank of river Sarayu 24, 153.

SAYANA (1370 A.D.)—The learned commentator of the Vedas; sometimes identified with Madhava and Vidyaranya.

SIVAPURANA—One of the 18 puranas ascribed to Vyasa. It speaks of the Leela and heroic acts of Lord Siva. 6, 65, 134, 135.

SUNDARAR—A Saiva Nayanar (710 to 735 A.D.) who succeeded Appar and sang the praise of Siva and spread Saivism. See Appar 70.

SEKKILAR—A native of Kunnathur in Chingleput Dt. He has written the Periyapuranam in Tamil dealing with the story of Siva. 70.

SKANDA PURANA—One of the 18 and the biggest Puranas ascribed to Vyasa dealing with numerous subjects. xiii, 1, 2, 53, 59, 61, 65, 81, 82, 114, 115, 116, 144, 148, 179, 180, 181, 215.

SRAVASTI—27°-30' N 82°-30' E. It was the Capital of Lava. 79.

SRINAGAR—On the way to Badari from Haridwar. 136, 142.

SRINGERI—60 miles west of Birur in Mysore on the bank of Tunga river. 9 miles from the place is Sringagiri or Rishya Sringa Giri. It is said that Rishya Sringa was born here. Acharya Adi Sankara is said to have established his first math here with Sarada as the deity in 8th century A.D. 104, 105, 106, 107, 110, 111, 119.

SRIRANGAM—10°-47' N 78°-37' E. Three miles north of Trichinopoli. It is an island between two branches of Kauveri (Kauveri on the south and Coleroon on the north). It has the celebrated Vaishnava shrine of Shri Ranganatha in the reclining posture on the great serpent Adi Sesha. 124, 125, 127.

SOMESWARA—Poet 1179-1262 A.D. of Vadnagar, the Rajkavi and Purohit of the Gujrat Rulers and the author Kirti Kaumudi, Surathotsava, Ullagha Raghava etc. 121, 122.

TAKSHASHILA—33°-N 73° E. City said to have been founded by Taksha, Son of Bharata. 79.

TAPI (TAPATI)—XXII. River flowing south of Satpura Mts. flowing parallel to Narmada.

TEHRI—A halting place between Haridwar and Kedar. 136.

TIRUMALISAI—One of the twelve Vaishnava Alwars who spread Vaishnavism in the South and composed devotional songs in Tamil. 70, 71.

TIRUMANGAI ALWAR—One of the twelve Vaishnava Alwars who propagated the Vaishnava faith in South India. 70, 71.

TIRUMELAR—One of the sixty-three Nayanars who spread Saivism in South and composed poems in praise of God Siva. See Appar. 70.

TIRUPATI—In Chandragiri Taluka, Chittur Dt. Andhra Pradesh. It is 70 miles from Madras and six miles from Renigunta Jn. on the Madras—Bombay line of S. R. The sacred Temple of Srinivasa is on the hill. Tirumalai is 2800 ft. above Sea level. It is known as Venkatachala, Seshachala

and Seshadri. In Tamil literature it is called Vengadam. This was the northern boundary of the Tamil speaking country. It is also called Tirumalai. 173, 177; 178, 181.

TUKARAM (1607-1649)—A famous Maharashtra saint and Bhakta of Vithobha. He has composed numerous Abhangas. 100.

TULSIDAS (1531 to 1622 A.D.)—The great poet in Hindi. He wrote the famous Ramacharita Manasa and other works. 82, 83.

THANESWAR—On the banks of the river Saraswati—North of Delhi, near Kurukshetra. 20, 21.

TRJUGINARAYAN—One of the halts on the way to Kedar. 136.

TRISTHALI SETU—A treatise by Narayana Bhatta on the three famous pilgrim centres Prayaga, Kasi and Gaya. xv, 32.

TRISTHALI—The three holy places, Prayaga, Kasi and Gaya.

UKHIMATH—A halting place on the way to Kedar. 136.

UJJAIN—23°-15' N and 75°-45' E. Also known as Avanti. It was the capital of Vikramaditya, and King Bhoja. There is the temple of the Jyotirlinga of Mahakaleswara, Kumbha Mela occurs here every twelve years. It is a town in Madhya Bharat on the banks of R. Sipra.

UTTARA KASI—On the way to Kedar and next to Jamnotri. 136.

VALLABHACHARYA. (1449 to 1531 A.D.)—The great Acharya who preached Suddha Advaita or Pushtimarga. He is the author of Anubhashya, Subodhini and other works. 91, 126.

VALLABH DHOLA—1640-1751. A Gujarati poet. 121.

VALABHI—Ancient city in Saurashtra and the capital of Maitrakas. Queen Pushpavati of Siladitya, King of Vallabhi records of her pilgrimage to Arasur in 746 A.D. 117.

- VARAHA**—A Purana ascribed to Vyasa. 35, 53, 55, 86, 89.
- VARAHAMIHIRA** (490 A.D.)—A famous astrologer who was said to be in the court of the legendary King Vikramaditya, Later than Aryabhatta. 63.
- VALMIKI**—A sage who was the author of Ramayana. He had his Asrama on the bank of river Tamasa, a tributary of Ganga. 24, 82.
- VAMANA**—One of the 18 puranas ascribed to Sage Vyasa 75.
- VIDYARANYA (MADHAVA)**—Was Jagadguru at Sringeri from 1331 A.D. He blessed the establishment of Vijayanagara by Harihara and Bukka in 1365. Sometimes he is identified with Sayana and sometimes with his brother. 108, 109, 110.
- VISHNUPRAYAG**—One of the stages leading to Badarinath. 136, 142.
- VISHNUPURANA**—One of the eighteen puranas ascribed to Vyasa treating of Vishnu's exploits. 53.
- VEDANTA DESIKA (VENKATACHARYA)**—Succeeded Ramanuja. During his time the Vaishnavas split into two camps. Contemporary of Vidyaranya. 124, 126, 130.
- YASKA** (800 B.C.)—Famous author of Nuruks. 32, 35.
- YAMUNACHARYA**—Preceptor of Ramanuja and the Vaishnava teacher. He was successor of Nathamuni. He is known as Alavandar. 127.
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MAP OF INDIA

showing the location
of places and thirthas
dealt with in this book.

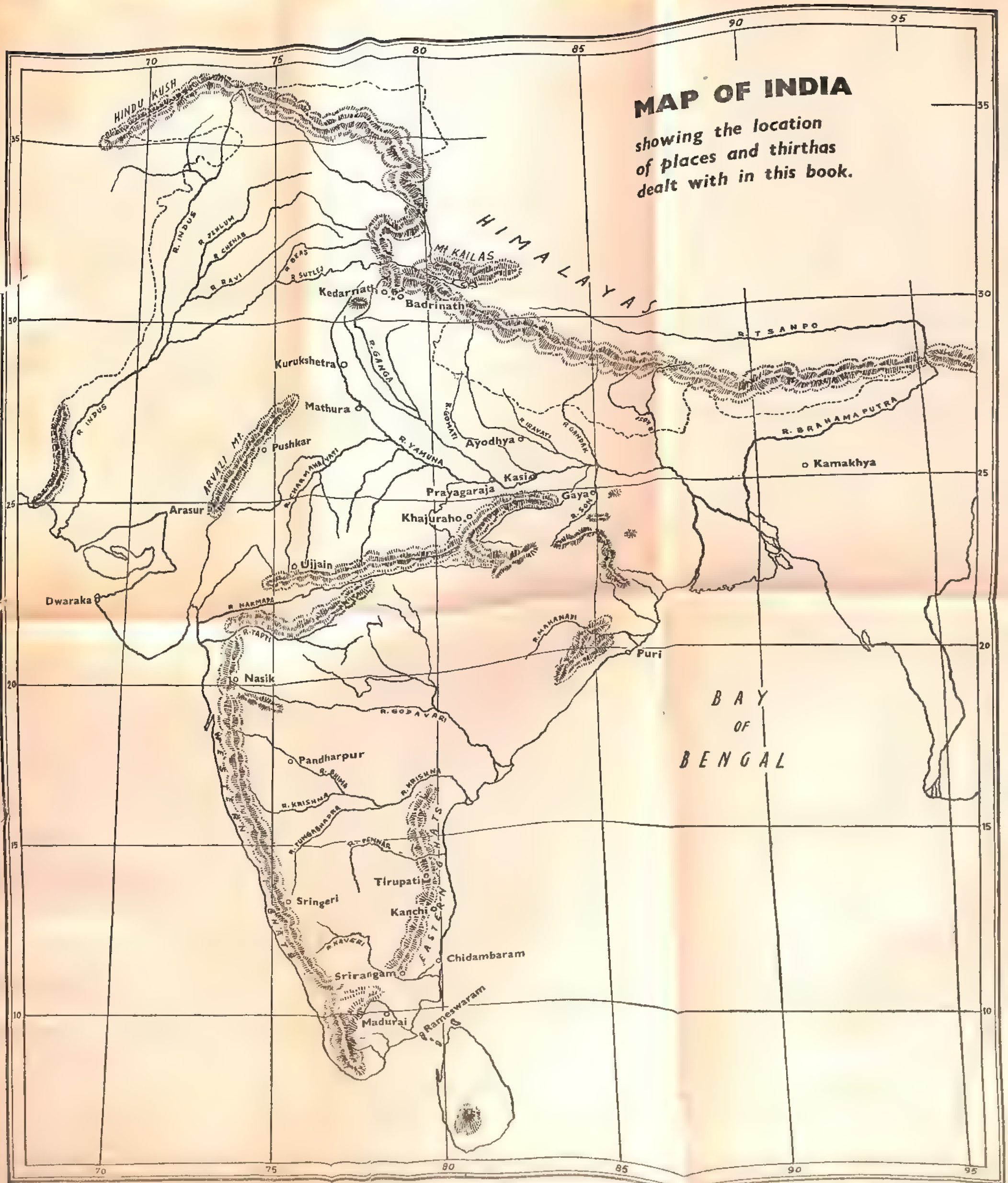


PLATE I



Bathing Ghats, Banaras.

PLATE II



A view of Rameshwaram Temple.

PLATE III



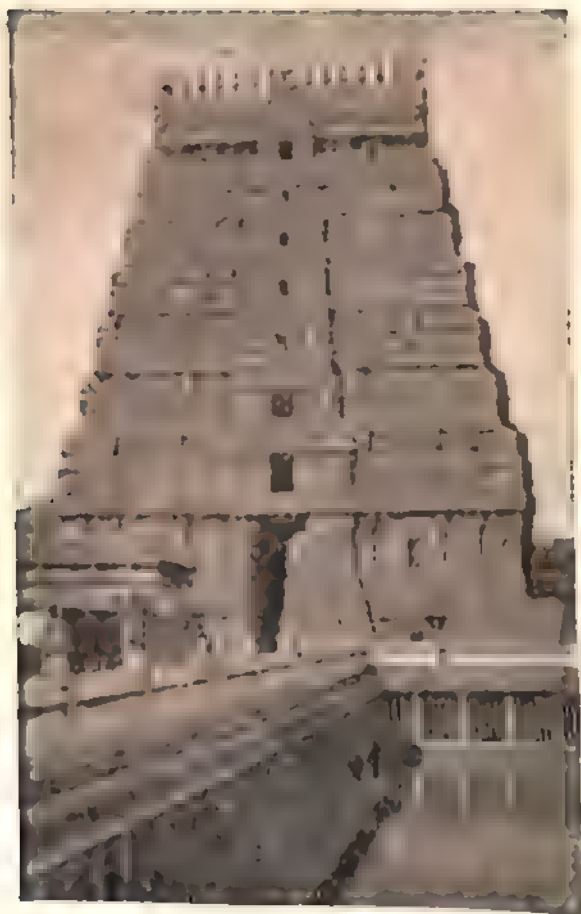
Jagannath Temple, Puri.

PLATE IV



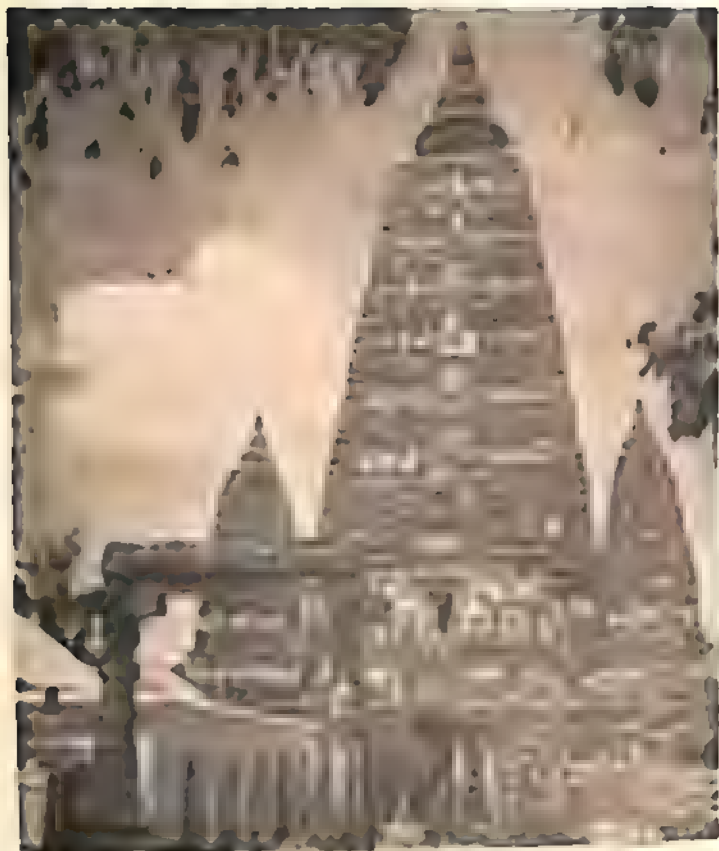
Puri Car Festival.

PLATE V



Siva Temple, Chidambaram.

PLATE VI



*Temple at Buddha Gaya where Buddha,
received enlightenment.*

PLATE VII



The Palace of Tirumal Nayak, Madurai.

PLATE VIII



A view of the Gopurams and the famous "Golden Lotus" pond within the precincts of the Temple, Madurai.



The main gate of the Chanderprasad Temple, Agra.

PLATE X

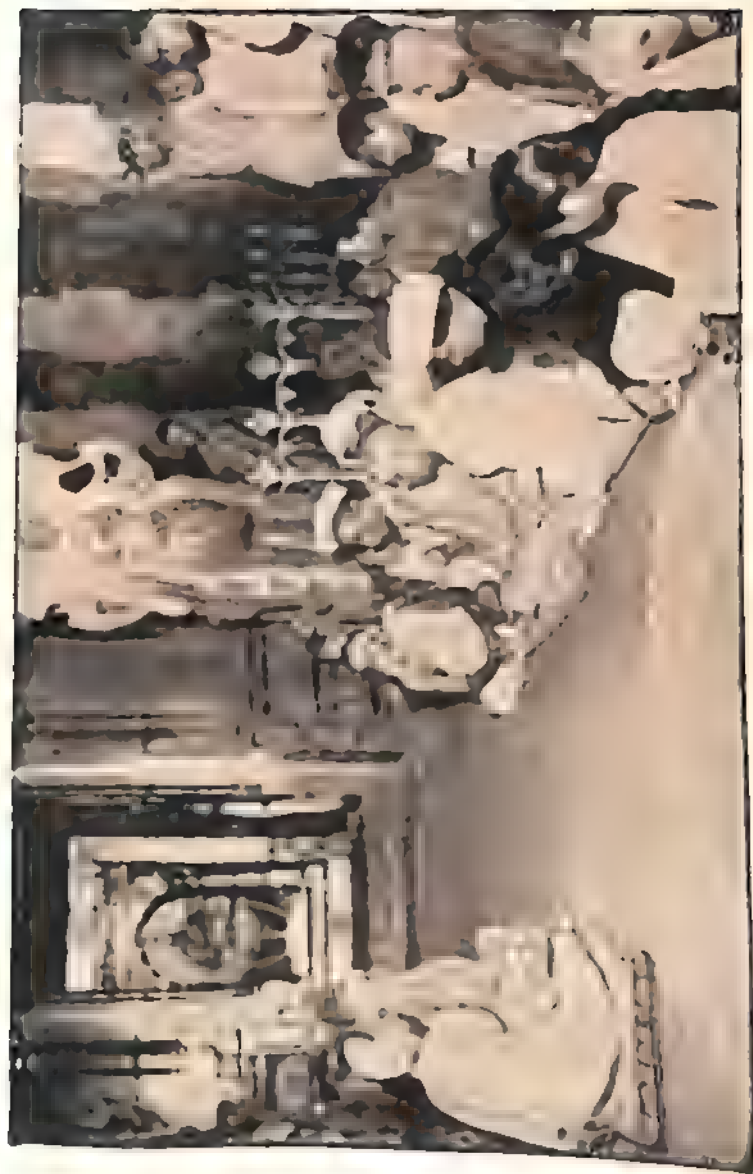


(a) The Tower of the Kailasa Temple, Maharastra.



(b) A View of the Kailasa Temple, Maharastra.

PLATE XI

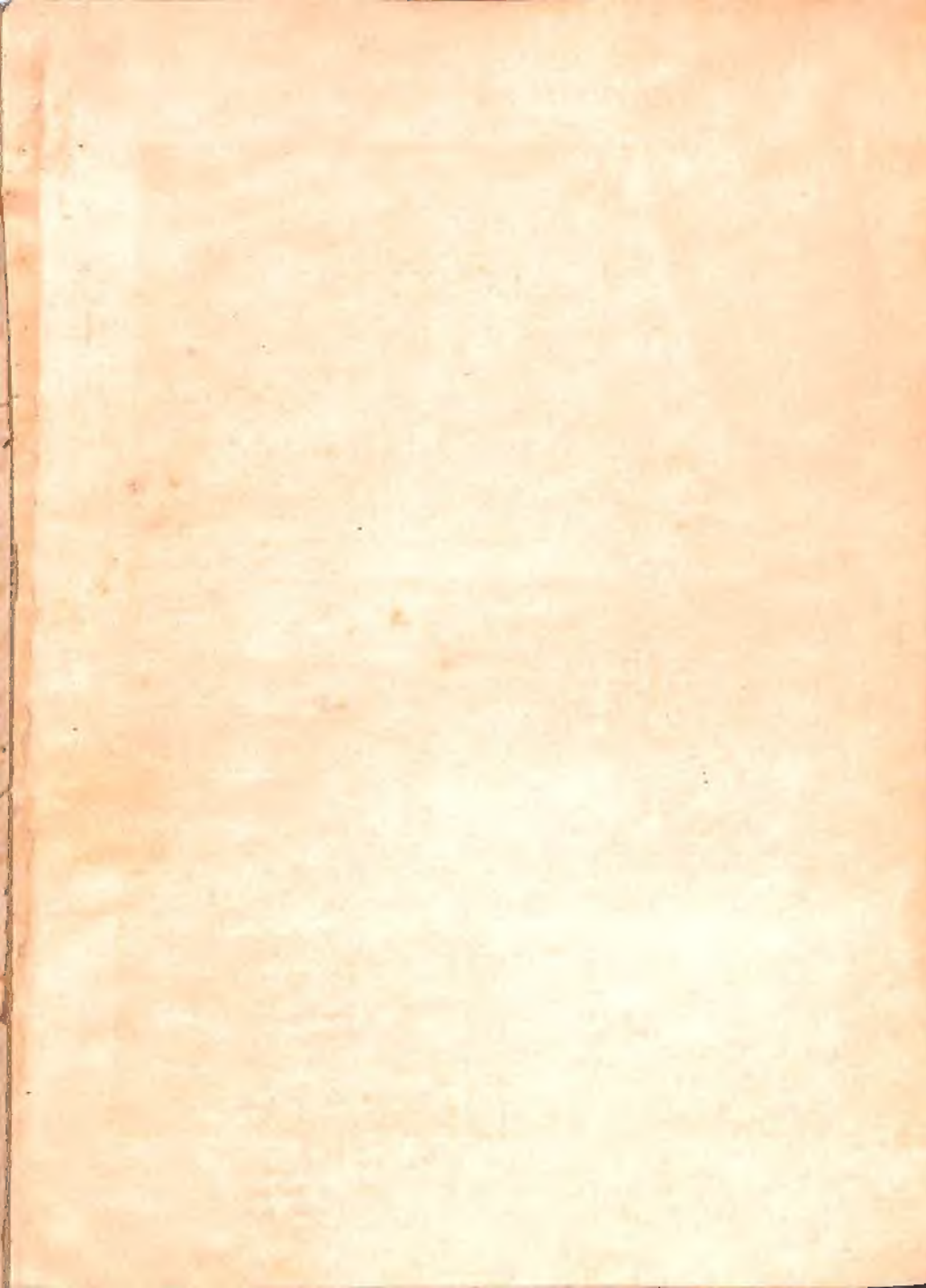


Rashtrapati Dr. Rajendra Prasad in conversation with His Holiness the present Sankaracharya and his predecessor when he paid a visit to Sringeri Matt.

PLATE XII



The magnificent Gopuram of Sri Govindaraja Temple in lower Tirupati.



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Versatile writer, noted scholar and leading Advocate of the Bombay Bar, Shri Jayantkrishna H. Dave, M.A., LL.B., had a brilliant academic career winning many a coveted prize. He had his legal training as a junior under Shri K. M. Munshi. He was for some time Chief Justice in the Banswara State of Rajasthan. His great erudition in Sanskrit and Dharma-sastras has made him an authority on Hindu Law. He has critically edited an erudite work on Dharma Sastra, *Vyavahara Prakasa* of Prithvichandra. Presently he is a Member of the Senate of the Bombay University, and part-time Professor of Hindu Law in the Law College, Bombay. Shri Dave is *qul vive* to the cause of Sanskrit. He is a Member of the Central Board of Sanskrit Studies constituted by the Government of India as per the recommendations of the Sanskrit Commission of which also he was a Member. He is also the Honorary General Secretary of the Sanskrit Vishva Parishad, Honorary Director of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Managing Editor, *Bhavan's Journal*, *Bharati* and *Bharatiya Vidyā*. He had been Secretary of the Gujarat Sahitya Parishad for more than twelve years.

His articles on 'Immortal India' in the *Bhavan's Journal* have been widely appreciated. They are now collected in book form in four volumes.